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WEARINESS

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FROM THE ESTATE OF
FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY
Overseer, Lecturer,
Parkman Professor of Theology,
Plummer Professor of Christian Morals,
Dean, Professor Emeritus
1877–1936

WEARINESS

WEARINESS

BY

H. L. SIDNEY LEAR

AUTHOR OF

"FOR DAYS AND YEARS," "CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHIES," ETC.

"O Father, touch the East and light
The light that shone when Hope was born"

New York

JAMES POTT

12, ASTOR PLACE

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PREFACE

THESE few thoughts were written down at the request of two friends, on whom God's Hand was gently resting in "undressing for the grave." Before the accomplishment of their wish, both have entered into their rest, realizing the fulness of those truths which were their stay while waiting their Father's Will. If these desultory, simple pages can help any weary soul to bear patiently on till the morning breaks, and the shadows flee away, it will, perhaps, be joy and thankfulness added to that they now share in the Presence of their Lord.

WEARINESS.

I.

Depression, low spirits, unconquerable though unreasonable sadness, utter weariness of life and its circumstances, loneliness of heart and spirit—how continually we come across our fellow men and women suffering in more or less aggravated form and degree, from some of these most painful phases of moral sickness: even if one may not go a step further, and say that there are few who have passed that point where human life and strength is on the decline, to whom some such seasons of trouble and trial do not occasionally

come; while not even those whose earlier age might be supposed to imply immunity therefrom are by any means always free. Everybody's experience will confirm this; the question is not as to the fact, but rather whether, accepting it, we may not find sources of comfort and relief, which may either remove the trouble, or, better still, enable the sufferers to turn

> "The bitter pool
> Into a bright and breezy lake,
> The throbbing brow to cool;
> Till left awhile with Thee alone,
> The wilful heart be fain to own
> That He, by Whom our bright hours shone,
> Our darkness best may rule."

Perhaps one of the worst things to be done in such cases is to try and ignore the truth; to make a pretence to ourselves or others that all is well, when, on the contrary, all is ill. From certain points of view there is greater

danger in this course even than in complaint and moan, bad as these are. But, at all events, there is more honesty and reality in the latter, while the make-believe of a superficial content, with growing sadness beneath, is nothing but a corroding poison, sometimes the result of pride, which shrinks from what it conceives to be the humiliation of pity; sometimes caused by the sensitiveness of a refinement which shrinks from the exposure of its griefs to unsympathetic or indifferent passers-by. Yet, very often, experience shows us that a quiet facing of our depression, a little calm search into its causes, and a patient use of such means as others have found helpful—such means as these will, under God's blessing, lighten the load which weighed the weary spirit down, with an almost unbearable sense of helpless suffering.

From whatever cause the mental

cloud that darkens our sky, probably to all sufferers one of the bitterest parts is the feeling, more or less urgent, "Was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?" Formed as we are with so strong a link to, and actual sympathy for, our fellow-men, there is something inexpressibly trying to most in the idea that no one has ever felt as they do, no one can fully realize the poignancy, or the weariness, or the heart-sickness of their peculiar trial. Half the weary long stories which we have most of us been called upon to hear in visiting the sick and sorrowful, are told through an unconscious craving for this sympathy, for the assurance that some one else has felt, has borne the like burthen.

Now no one will deny that it is as much our duty to seek relief under moral distress, which incapacitates us often for the duties God lays upon us,

as under physical pains—a broken leg or a scalded hand—not of necessity a relief which is altogether to remove the pain, but which shall so subdue and sanctify it, as to bring forth sweetness from that which is bitter, and make the sufferer ready to say heartily with King David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Let us see, then, whether the range of sympathy with our trouble is not well-nigh boundless. And while I conceive that no Christian can need pointing to Him "Who would feel all that He might pity all," for the truest and deepest sympathy in every mental pain whatsoever; while it is impossible not to lay the foundation of our consolation in fellow-suffering upon the dear Lord Whose tender love is really never for one instant forgetful or dormant when His children are in need—so much has been said and written so powerfully

on the deep and touching subject of our Lord's sufferings and sympathy, His temptation, His agony, His desolation, His immeasurable affliction in the sorrows of His people, that here it is scarce necessary to do more than indicate this chiefest and truest of all consolations to the weary heart. We are so familiar with His gracious words of comfort and strength, that perhaps their very familiarity sometimes deadens the keen sense of their power. Else it might seem as though nothing more could be needed than such a sympathetic bidding as "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Not necessarily weary and heavy laden with sin only, but with all the daily trials and disappointments of life, the blank sense of failure and falling back; the lonely heart, the terror-shaken, or worn-out, quivering nerves—all these are tenderly

bidden to come to Him for the rest they so pitifully crave after.

> "The languid pulses Thou canst tell,
> The nerveless spirit tune."

If the sense of unrest, the want of home sweetness comes across one, what a fellow feeling with Him those words bring, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head." If those nearest and best loved have seemed unsympathetic or careless, and the sensitive heart cowers back in desolation, is there not help in remembering that those nearest in this world to Him "were offended in Him;" and that to His own people, who daily saw His miracles, He was constrained to cry out, "How long shall I suffer you?" When all seems unresponsive to our best and highest longings, and the clouds hang heavy

over what were once bright hopes—perhaps of good work to be done for God, or among those we thought to help and influence in the right way—is it not a consolation to think of Him, our Dear Master, in similar disappointment, if we may dare to say so, "sighing deeply in His spirit" (S. Mark viii. 12), and "groaning in the spirit and troubled"? Or when, do what we may, we cannot turn away our thoughts from troubles and pains either really impending, or (which is almost as bad) represented by our imagination as such, can we not find comfort in the many times He—as Man—sadly told His disciples how "many things He must suffer," and "what things should happen unto Him"?

We read the Gospels over and over, till their inspired words are (and thank God for it!) familiar; but think what a Christian would feel who could by

some accident read for the first time, amid some heart-sickness of his own, the words spoken by our Lord, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death;" or those most deeply mysterious and solemn of all words ever uttered, "Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt." "How am I straitened!" Is it not the cry of many a poor sad heart since His Divine Lips breathed it? and does He not know the precise pressure and anguish which wrings it forth? He Who "was very sorrowful" because the young man He loved turned away, and Who wept over Jerusalem because she "would not know the things which belonged to her peace"—does He not feel the ache and piteous regret of a heart which is wounded by those that should be its joy? Or who can feel without loving

sympathy when such failures darken life, if they recall the betrayal, the denial, the disciples flying, His countrymen taking up stones to stone Him?

Again, how much there is that we are not directly told, but which none can ponder over our Blessed Lord's life on earth without forcibly realizing—the exquisite sensitiveness which that God made man must have possessed, and to which the human conditions surrounding Him must have brought perpetual jar? His very Apostles and disciples, we know, often could not understand Him; their rough ways must have often clashed with His all-gentle nature. Every hard or sinful word spoken in His hearing, every act of sin or coarseness of the people around, every deed of scribe or Pharisee or elder which we should in modern parlance call "vulgar," must have been so harassing to His sensitive spirit:—all physical

pain and weariness must have been more painful, more weary, to His exquisitely pure, finely strung frame than to any other. Do not such thoughts as these, the natural outcome of His bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, bring a solace to the wounded, sinking soul, of a very true and vivid kind? They are embodied in the following short litany, which some heavy-laden hearts have found to help them best by taking one clause at a time to dwell upon, repeating it over and over again, striving to make the thought their very own, and to carry it, like the bundle of myrrh of the Canticles, in their breast, till it becomes a part of themselves; till the sadness and weariness He has sanctified becomes a precious treasure, and they can dare to hope that they do not

"Grudge the anguish keen,
Which makes them like their Lord."

Jesus, by Thy hidden life on earth,
By all Thy unknown sorrows,
Deliver me.

From shrinking from a life of self-sacrifice,
From self-will and selfishness,
Jesus, deliver me.

By Thy first feelings of sadness,
By Thy first meeting roughness and rudeness,
By Thy first sight of sin,
By Thy first touch of pain;
By Thy first act of dependence,
By Thy life of loneliness,
Jesus, deliver me.

From impatience in suffering,
From complaining in loneliness,
From trusting in my own strength,
From seeking to serve Thee in my own way,
From impatience with the infirmities of others,
From looking for the praises of man,
Blessed Jesus, deliver me.

By Thy sympathy with our temptation,
Deliver me.

From unwillingness to bear temptation,
From fainting under it,
From mistrust of Thy sympathy when tempted,
O Jesus, deliver me.

By Thy dread of coming agony,
By the perfect yielding of Thy will,
Blessed Jesus, deliver me.

From despondency in the hours of trial,
From doubting Thy love in the hiding of Thy face,
From mistrust of Thy help in difficulty,
O Jesus, deliver me.

By Thy taking up Thy cross,
Deliver me, O Jesus.

From fretting under suffering,
From impatiently seeking relief,
From over eagerness for human sympathy,
From ever doubting Thy perfect sympathy,
By Thy love which endured so much for us,
Deliver me, O Jesus.

From want of perseverance under weariness,
Deliver me, O Jesus.

By Thy soul poured out in death,
By Thy victory over Death,
Deliver me, O Jesus.

In my hours of darkness,
In the hour when all help fails me,
In the moment that I go hence alone,
Most merciful Jesus, save and deliver me.

II.

PROBABLY, next to our Lord Himself, no words have carried so much comfort to those in suffering as the words of David. But not to dwell upon these generally, have you ever read the Psalms with a view to those passages which make one see how much the great King must have endured from what we should now call depression, low spirits, and that almost intolerable sense of weary desolation and lack of all sweetness in life, which tries so many among ourselves? How often he cries out, "My soul is sore troubled! I am weary of my groaning. How long shall I be so vexed in my heart?" "My soul cleaveth to the dust!" "I am become like a bottle in the smoke!"

Some complain of the sharp terrors, nameless, yet torturing, which sweep over their minds, and will not be dismissed. Was it not something of this which made David cry out, "I am horribly afraid!" "The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell came about me;" or, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me: fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and a horrible dread hath overwhelmed me;" "My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto hell;" "I am in misery, and like unto him that is at the point to die: even from my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind;" "All Thy waves and storms are gone over me."

Or the weariness of consuming sorrow, making the poor, weak body faint and feeble—did David not know what that was when he exclaimed, "Have mercy

upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble, and mine eye is consumed for very heaviness; yea, my soul and my body"?

Or the vague sense of depression and sadness, without real definite cause, which to many is hardest of all, because, as they say, there is nothing to be done for a causeless trouble, and it can only lie in themselves—surely that was realized when the touching words were reiterated so sadly, "Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

Or the desolate feeling of being neglected, uncared for: "I am clean forgotten, as a dead man out of mind;" "I looked also upon my right hand, and saw there was no man that would know me. I had no place to flee unto, and no man cared for my soul."

Or the fear that one's patience and

power of endurance is failing; the dread of breaking down and forgetting to see God's Hand in our trial—how forcibly David must have realized it when he said with such a wail of entreaty, "Hear me, O Lord, AND THAT SOON, for my spirit waxeth faint!"

Or to those whose mental sorrow lies in the weight of remembered sin and a bitter fear (arising from too feeble a grasp of the certainty of loving forgiveness to all who seek it), is there not sympathy in David's words, "Thine indignation lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast vexed me with all Thy storms: my sight faileth for very trouble. Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul, and hidest Thy face from me?".

The more we look into Holy Scripture, the more clearly we shall perceive that, in some shape or other, these mental pains and trials seem to have been part of the training the Lord and

Lover of men has seen good for all whom He leads by sharp and thorny paths to His holy hill. May not the "horror of great darkness" which fell upon Abraham have partaken of this nature? And when Isaac wandered thoughtfully in the eventide, before he was comforted by Rebekah's coming, was he not striving to conquer and submit to God's Will—what we should call depression and low spirits? It would seem as though Jacob had been very subject to such trials, and the plaintive sadness which "refused to be comforted" after Joseph's loss can be traced all through his history. Moses frequently shows the tendency to be oppressed and shrink dispiritedly from the great works to which he was called, so that even at one time "the anger of the Lord was kindled" by his depression, which made him hold back timidly when called forward into action.

And may we not fairly believe that Gideon, when "faint yet pursuing," was conquering the tendency to be depressed and out of heart, which is so apt to come upon us all?

What can be more pathetic than the brief record of Samson's dejection? and, in spite of her noble unselfishness, who can fail to read Naomi's deep and mournful depression in her cry, "Call me Mara: for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me"? Hannah, as she "wept, and did not eat," and "was in bitterness of soul;" Saul, when the evil spirit came upon him; Barzillai, when by reason of his age and infirmities the pleasantness and alleviations of life failed him—did not they all feel depression in some of the various forms in which it even now besets us? Of King David's expression of it in the Psalms we have already spoken; but who, saddened by separation from those

they love, can help turning with sympathy to the parting between him and Jonathan, when "they kissed one another and wept one with another, and David exceeded;" or to that chamber over the gate, where he wept for his son, feeling that no earthly prosperity could give him any gladness while he missed the voice that was gone: or as the light and sunshine of youth and health fade down to cheerless grey, who but must be sure that it was even so with the great King, when he sat apart, in his failing years, feeble, without spring or force, chill and cold in spite of all the warmth which skill and wealth could procure him?

Perhaps one of the most remarkable of all fellow-sufferers from this foe, depression, was Solomon, whose possession of everything this world could afford only led him to the mournful

utterance, "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. . . . This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith." The keynote of Solomon's summary of life has surely a ring of far deeper depression in it than David's most sorrowful cries; for one cannot help feeling that the more prosperous monarch's was the worldlier point of view, and there is something intensely sad in his recapitulation of all that men imagine the groundwork of a cheerful life—pleasure, mirth, laughter, conviviality, music, great interests such as building, planting, gathering together collections which we should call artistic and literary—with the final conclusion that all these were vanity and vexation of spirit, and that so little power had they to cheer his heart that he hated all his labour;

all his days were sorrows, and his travail grief; nor did his heart take rest in the night." Of course, we must not overlook the Preacher's object in dwelling upon the saddest side of human life, or that he had a grand aim, namely, to point out what only can give that rest and joy to the heart of man, made as it is to find them in God alone. Still, it is surely fair to imagine that the hollowness and weariness of all these things had been really tested and felt by the writer, and were handled with individual experience, not theoretically alone.

One of the most striking and instructive instances of heavy depression endured by one of God's chosen saints, and ministered to directly by Himself, is that of Elijah. Whose heart does not feel a responsive quiver as we think of the prophet, who had done such great and mighty deeds in his

Master's Name; who had such abundant reason to feel confident in His support and comfort; who had himself been made the means of carrying so much solace to the troubles of others? And yet, notwithstanding all these reasons, as we should say, for cheerful, courageous buoyancy under a temporary cloud, he is so entirely disheartened, so prostrate in heart and spirits, that going out into the wilderness, Elijah sits down sadly and drearily under a juniper tree, "requesting for himself that he might die," and in his weary discouragement seeming almost to murmur at God's Hand weighing on him so heavily. "It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." And even after he had been refreshed and comforted by the angel of the Lord (who was, as some of the Fathers say, our Blessed Lord Himself), and had

found that the strength of the supernatural food given him, was sufficient to carry him through forty days and forty nights' journey, do we not trace some return of the depression in his seeking refuge in a cave, when replying to the almost stern question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" he returns to the trouble of loneliness and discouragement—"I, even I only, am left"? And once more he is raised up and sent forth by his Master, taught that as his day, so should his strength be.

"Back then, complainer; loathe thy life no more,
Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore,
Because the rocks the nearer prospect close.
Yet in fallen Israel are there hearts and eyes
That day by day in prayer like thine arise;
Thou knowest them not, but their Creator knows."

King Hezekiah, again—was there ever a more plaintive outburst of dejection than his, when he turned his face

to the wall and compared his life to a shepherd's tent, pitched one day and removed the next; to a weaver's web, cut off abruptly; to the frightened chatter of a bird, startled and alarmed; to the moan of a dove, implying that, though he sought heavenly consolation, it was deferred, for "mine eyes fail with looking upward"? And then, with a great sob of agony, he breaks forth with the cry of one who knows not what he wants, only that his trouble is well-nigh too heavy to bear, and that the help of man is vain: "O Lord, I am oppressed: undertake for me."

I can never forget the association of these words with a very poor, very sorely tried peasant woman, whose weight of woe used to seem almost past bearing at times. She could not read, nor bear to be read to much; and fearfulness for future trouble among

those she loved, vague terrors rising out of her own weakness, together with the lack of anything bright or hopeful to look to on this side the grave, made her very miserable. She could not use or follow long prayers; but once having had Hezekiah's brief cry put into her lips, "O Lord, I am oppressed: undertake for me," it became her main comfort—her "stand-by," as she herself called it; and when the dark hour fell sadly, or misgivings vague and impossible to soothe by her own or other's reasoning arose, that petition, made her very own, never failed her. They were almost the last words on her lips, nor could any one doubt that He had of a truth "undertaken" for His suffering servant, and when the fitting moment came, removed the oppression for ever.

Ezra, spreading out his hands in heart heaviness; Nehemiah, sitting

down and weeping; Esther, overwhelmed with the prospect of evil about to come upon her people; Jeremiah, feeling himself weaker than a child, and unable to speak, crying out, "I am pained at my very heart;" "When I would comfort myself, my heart is faint within me!" and, again, saying that God has "filled him with bitterness," his heart is faint, and his eyes dim; Ezekiel, sighing, with feeble hands, weak knees, and fainting spirit; Daniel, "troubled by his cogitations, and his countenance changed in him;" Jonah, faint, desponding, angry (or perhaps irritable); Habakkuk, moved by his burden to exclaim, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear!" —were they not all "men like unto ourselves," pressed down and groaning under a weight of sorrow and dejection? And surely we must remember that though now we can see how

directly their trial came from God, and often perceive for what wise design it was intended, doubtless they at the time felt much as we, His feebler servants, feel now—conscious of infirmity, unworthiness, and oppression, far more than of the higher side of what is so hard to bear.

And as we trace this common infirmity of human nature through the earlier records of Holy Scripture, so do we in the brighter pages of the Christian dispensation. Joseph, when he was troubled concerning his espoused wife, or when afraid to go into Judea, because of Archelaus;—Blessed Mary herself, many a time, from the days when the prophecy of Rama was fulfilled, to that whereon she saw her Divine Son expire, and heard herself committed to S. John's care—did she not fully realize all the anxiety and dispiriting sadness, which seems to us

often as a sword piercing our hearts? Do we not read of the Apostles, even at their Master's side, being "exceeding sorry;" and is not the Comforter, Who was sent to carry them over their troubles, *our* Comforter too, and ready to hearken even to our griefs, however insignificant they may seem—to soothe and heal them?

Did not S. Paul and S. Barnabas feel a sore pressure of some such pangs as we are subject to, when they had "so sharp a contention that they departed asunder one from the other;" or was not the human sorrow of a loving heart strong in the former, when he cried out to his friends, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" Or again, not to quote his intense suffering under the warfare within him of good and evil, which made him exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!" what a marvellous revelation is made in the

words wherein he tells us that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Or, again, is there not a whole gospel of consolation in his address to the people of Corinth, telling them how "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, . . . comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"? Or what fellow-feeling rises up within us as we hear the Apostle say, "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears"?

And if the "thorn in the flesh," which so sorely tried him, and of which he so reiteratedly besought the Lord that it might depart from him, was

some higher, less selfish trouble than that which bows you or me to the ground (though probably it was indeed some essentially human infirmity, which to the great Apostle seemed as unworthy of vanquishing him, as your petty griefs appear to your theoretical judgment), yet the same answer may surely stay us up, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." What a continual reference throughout his letters there is to "comfort," as needed by all those he writes to; and how closely the exhortation "not to be weary in well-doing" comes home to our failing, weariful spirits!

Again, is there not a tonic for depression in S. James's assurance, "Behold, we count them happy which endure;" or S. Peter's bidding his spiritual children rejoice "although for a season they are in heaviness through

manifold temptations," and promising that after "suffering a while," his and their Master will "make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them;" or in S. John teaching us to put away fear, and have confidence that what we ask in faith will be given us? And even more than in these, there is comfort for the faint-hearted throughout the wondrous Revelations of the supernatural world, so full of promise to those that persevere and overcome; of assurance that pain and distress is but the rebuke and chastening of those their Lord loves; and of pledge that in a little while the tribulation shall be over for ever, and all tears wiped away from their eyes.

Nor if saints of God, and those they led and taught, needed so much of consolation through the weary course of this life, need we marvel if to us, too, the weight seems often well-nigh more

than we can bear, unless of a truth, like them, we "cast all our care" on their Lord, Who is ours as much as theirs—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

III.

Thomas à Kempis has said more words of comfort for the suffering soul than perhaps almost any other writer. The spirit of the whole "Imitation" is gathered up in that sentence, "Seek not much rest, but much patience." Is it not, often at least, because we are so anxious to be happy in this world, so eager to grasp at a condition belonging not to here but hereafter, that we fret and fidget for what God has denied us? Surely many a person who would be shocked at the idea of deliberately longing after temporal blessings which God denies them of murmuring because this or that good gift is withheld, yet does practically the

same thing by yielding to sadness and depression, because—he scarce knows why—but all seems dull and gloomy, and his surroundings cheerless and unattractive; and he murmurs because he craves for a happiness and cheerfulness which, for some wise purpose, God denies to him. Let such an one hear the venerable author of the "Imitation:"

"It is better oftentimes and safer that a man should not have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh.

"When thou art ill at ease and much troubled, then is the time of deserving best.

"So long as we carry about us this frail body of ours, we can never be without sin, or live without weariness and pain.

"We would gladly be quiet and freed from all pain, but seeing by sin

we have lost our innocency, we have together with that lost also the true felicity. Therefore it becomes us to have patience, and to wait for the mercy of God, until this iniquity pass away, and mortality be swallowed up of life.

"Put all thy trust in God; He shall answer for thee, and will do in all things what is best for thee. Thou hast not here an abiding city, and wheresoever thou mayst be, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim, neither shalt thou ever have rest, unless thou be most inwardly united unto Christ.

"Why dost thou here gaze about, since this is not the place of thy rest? In heaven ought to be thy home, and all earthly things are to be looked upon as it were by the way."

Is it not well to look the matter calmly and resolutely in the face? to say, "I *must* suffer here; it is the

condition of eternal joy; and let the suffering by which my everlasting happiness is prepared be what it may, I will accept it not only with patience, but with gladness. Body, mind, heart, imagination, or spirits, whatever has to bear the trial, I will submit to my Master's tender Hand without a murmur."

It is but for a little while, and the alternative is not between suffering or not suffering, but between suffering with a grudging, resisting heart, or with a loving submission which turns all to profit. The Curé d'Ars used to say to himself, "Now, my soul, thy part to-day is to commune with thy God in prayer, in toil, in struggle, and in suffering: Toil, and He will bless thy labour; strive, and he will bless thy strife; suffer, and He will bless thy pain." The point where we so often fail is in thinking or acting as if we

imagined that God heeds only our greater toils or sufferings, and not seeking the help and comfort which comes with realizing that nothing is too trivial for His loving care and pity. We must not only offer Him our heavy trials and woes, but the passing ache or pain, the little disappointment or failure, the daily weariness and disheartenment. And in so doing, not only do we find present help and alleviation, but far more precious gain—we acquire the habit of exercising the child's privilege of speaking constantly and unrestrainedly to the Father; the thrice blessed habit of calling Him into the heart's chamber, whatever be our need; of claiming His sympathy, His support, His guidance, in every detail of life as it gradually unwinds the golden chain which is letting us into His Bosom. And who that has realized what such communing is, how

different that speaking, so to say, straight into His listening Ear, from the mere formal repetition of set prayers, but must feel that any condition, however fraught with cares and trials, is infinitely welcome which tends to such loving intercourse, and brings the soul into closer contact with Him Who is its life?

IV.

THE life we live is full of suffering; it is the condition of our existence as the followers of a thorn-crowned Chieftain. Pain to be borne, and painful duties to be fulfilled: while, moreover, endurance of the one and fulfilment of the other are wont not unfrequently to produce an effect upon our sensitive, impressionable spiritual being, which to some becomes almost a life-long agony. To the Christian, realizing that his special calling is to take up his cross daily and follow his suffering Lord, this will seem no strange thing. But constrained as he is by the law of Christ to subject all natural inclinations to the supernatural, surrounded by moral trials and physical

pains, he is exposed to the perils of intense weariness, at times of almost overpowering disgust, crushing sadness, and bitter disappointment, such as may well make him cry out with S. Paul, "I die daily!"

Nevertheless, the soul which has really taken its stand on Calvary, and desires to be found there when the end comes, will not

> "Grudge the anguish keen,
> Which makes it like its Lord."

Such an one will not ask so much that the bitter cup may be taken away, as that it may be given healing virtue.

Probably all who have known much of suffering in themselves or in others, will be ready to admit that the form in which it is hardest to be borne is not so much in the great visible trials which come upon us, as in the various accessories of those trials. The difficulties, the repugnance and revulsion,

the weakness and fearfulness, the disgust at self, the disappointment in others; the chills and checks, the sense of failure and worthlessness, the powerlessness to look beyond a low grey horizon; the consciousness that joy, cheerfulness, happiness, are all there, but that we who suffer are spellbound, and cannot stretch out a hand to touch them—these things, under various aspects, make an element of anguish far harder to be borne than the most racking bodily pain, or the severest illness, unaccompanied by such moral suffering. And this moral agony has been not inaptly called "the marrow of pain." With our whole intellectual faculty we naturally abhor such pain, which besets it. Consequently, when we are called on to accept, even to welcome such agony, we are sorely distraught between the two things; the mind and will struggle betwixt them,

and nothing save God's Grace can enable us not merely to endure, but to will our own anguish. Yet to be indeed like our Lord, we must learn so to do; we must dwell upon His Passion, wherein His sacred Body endured all physical pain, and His human Soul all conceivable sadness, revulsion, and weariness; and that not only in those latter days which are commonly spoken of as "the Passion," but during the whole period of His Incarnation, from the manger to the tomb.

One of the Fathers has pointed out that the Garden of Gethsemane was, in truth, but a revelation to His disciples of what had been the entire life of their Master, in order that they might "not be troubled" when in their own degree such things came upon them.

The mental pains which beset our lives may be very much classed under

present, past, and future. Weariness, repulsion, and disgust for what comes with our daily claims and duties, are the chief elements of present suffering; regrets, remorse, unavailing longings, those specially besetting the past; fearfulness, disheartenment, and the excessive play of the imagination, shaping troubles which may never come to pass, are the sources which, to many a restlessly anxious soul, make the future as real a suffering as any possible present could be.

To lay down any methodical scheme of cure or consolation, any set system of ministering to such troubles, were vain and unreal. Springing from a thousand ever-varying sources, moulded and tinted by the infinite variety of individual character and temperament, mental troubles and pains are as legion; and they who would offer well-formulated, neatly drawn out comfort

would surely deserve to be met with Job's weary exclamation: "Miserable comforters are ye all!" Sometimes the specific offered to one form of neuralgic or other pain chances to relieve a casual patient who comes upon it unawares, and in like manner these desultory pages may carry a passing ray of relief to those for whom they are not specially intended. In any case all relief, as all probing, must come from the Hand of the great Physician.

V.

PROBABLY one of the hardest seasons of life, if not the hardest, is middle age. Some may at first sight be ready to deny this; but let them think again, and see if there be not reason for the assertion. It was made by John Keble—

> "Sweet is the infant's waking smile,
> And sweet the old man's rest;
> But middle age by no fond wile,
> No soothing calm is blest.
>
> "Still in the world's hot restless gleam
> She plies her weary task,
> While vainly for some pleasant dream
> Her wandering glances ask."

The spring and elasticity, the mere animal spirits, which many possess in youth, and which float us over so many

troubles; the quick red blood a. vigorous muscles, craving to co. their strength by use, have ceased to be. The hopefulness which made sure that to-day's cloud must be followed by to-morrow's sunshine; the energy of inexperience, which dashes on as if certain of success; the unspoilt tastes which find delight in every simple familiar pleasure; the confidence which looks for trust because itself is truthful; the readiness to please and be pleased, which has not been chilled or checked by rough collision with less ready hearts; above all, the glow of an affectionate temperament, which showers love with a prodigal wastefulness on all around, and expects to be met with love in return as a matter of course;—how inevitably these must all change as middle age advances! Even when the heart retains most of its early innocence and simple loving capacity,

—and, thank God, He does give this priceless blessing to not a few of His faithful children—when a fair share of good health leaves the spirits little checked, and disappointment and the failure of friendship has not soured or narrowed kindliness; still, at best, there must be a loss of buoyancy and power of enjoyment in the man or woman, as surely as the lamb and the kitten cease to frolic when they mature. Physical infirmities turn former pleasures into pain, or at best inconvenience; death (happy we if it be not indifference or coldness) has deprived us of those whose presence was light and joy.

"The objects we have loved are quite gone by,
The infinite reality comes on."

Paths once so pleasant as we trod them with the dear ones God has called to His rest, now seem dull and lonely; homes once cheerful and gay with

voices which were music to our ear, are grey and still; landscapes, pictures, books once shared with quick responsive minds, must now be gazed on alone, bringing up, maybe, happy but pathetic memories of what can never again be with us here; the ear is dulling, the eye less receptive, brain powers flag, and, above all—for this is to most the keenest trial—the infinite power of looking forward, which is the source of such boundless delight to the young, is more or less gone. Of course I mean purely from the temporal side; God forbid that it should be so in the higher aspect. *There*, at least, the prospective faculty should widen boundlessly, and the "hope that is set before us" expand infinitely; we should be able to say with the poet—

> "To me, at least, was never evening yet
> But seemed far beautifuller than its day."

But I am now speaking merely of the

earthly horizon, which in early years is apt to be so golden and filled with such stores of delight, even to those who have not failed to take in the spirit of S. Philip Neri's celebrated "And after?" and whose earthly horizon would not be complete at its brightest, without a heavenly one.

What child has not solaced itself, under a visit to the dentist, or some other like infliction, by the thought of a promised pleasure in the evening which is to reward patient endurance? And so onwards: we all are prone to lighten the immediate pressure by hope of bright earthly lights to come, until to some—not all—there is little left to hope for here, and our vision of the temporal future can perforce set little that is attractive before us, even on behalf of others;—till the heart, weaned painfully but surely from this life's hope, is fain to set itself steadily

heavenwards, and say, "All my appointed days will I wait until my change come."

But then comes in the glad thought that though there is indeed nothing here to look forward to, save what Jeremy Taylor calls "a calm undressing for the grave," there is much, very much, to fill the onward gaze, and to satisfy the craving need of those who "keep their best till last."

Waiting, with uncertainty or little hope, is doubtless a dreary thing, yet even that is to be preferred to the blank state of him who should have nothing to wait for; but surely when the waiting is cheered by the certainty of hope, the certainty of His promise Whose own we are, it is not so very hard a thing, and as it has been said, "It shall be our act of love to wait for His sake. Heaven will come soon. Life is a hardship, but not a very

grievous one, for it does not hinder our loving God."

And perhaps one of the surest ways of solacing this middle age, the blankest period of life, next to such spiritual means, is a hearty throwing ourselves into the lives, the thoughts, hopes, feelings, and doings of those who are now at the point we were at a little while since, and with whom experience ought to give us such a full sympathy. Instead of

> "Age would to youth return,
> Farther from heaven would be,
> To feel the wildfire burn,
> On idolizing knee
> Again to fall, and rob Thy shrine
> Of hearts, the light of love divine;"

we should strive to realize that

> "Ever the richest tenderest glow
> Sets round the autumnal sun—
> But there sight fails; no heart may know
> The bliss when life is done."

Perhaps nothing helps those younger

than ourselves better than to see that the truths, or principles, or beliefs—call them what you may—by which we profess to live and to have lived, are capable of giving calm, restful happiness when we are on the sunset side of the hill, and when we are necessarily cut off from much that seems to them of the very essence of life's pleasantness. And so a reflected light comes even upon the harsher lines of middle life, and as the shadows steal on and the soft evening tints gather round, the hope even this side the grave may yet be bright, and for others as well as for ourselves the promise be fulfilled—"At evening time there shall be light."

VI.

A BOOK might be filled with the various ideas expressed about life by different men and women—from the patriarch's assertion in his hundred and thirtieth year that "Few and evil have the days of my life been" (Gen. xlvii. 9), and the monarch's, "All man's days are sorrows, and his travail grief" (Eccles. ii. 23), to the "joy that is full" of S. John (1 S. John i. 4), and the "always rejoicing" of S. Paul (2 Cor. vi. 10).

Poets have luxuriated in melancholy dreams of the unreality, the emptiness, the sadness of life; while a healthier verse has told us that

> "Life is real! Life is earnest!
> And the grave is not its goal;
> 'Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'
> Was not spoken of the soul.

> "Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
> Is our destined end or way;
> But to act that each to-morrow
> Find us farther on our way."

There are some of whom the world says that they were marked from the first by destiny or ill luck; while the Christian says more tenderly with Job, that "the Hand of God hath touched" them in love and pity, to draw them, it maybe by a rough path, but surely, to Himself. Life has truly a very varying aspect, according as we view it from God's side or the world's. Very full of lesser troubles, which wear and fret: endless trifling discomforts and inconveniences, which cast a gloom; material uneasinesses, beginning with the weather, and ending in the crushing accident or shattering illness; intellectual and moral perplexities and failures; spiritual dulness and anxiety—though, indeed, these latter are scarcely

appreciable to the world. All these trials, great and small, depend in their force and their effect entirely on how they are met—if they only cause irritation and soreness, or if they bring with them a calming sense of God's fatherly dealing; as tonics and alteratives to His sick child, curbs and bearing-reins to keep us in the right road.

Is it Tauler or S. Philip Neri who tells us of the beggar, sitting on some church steps, being saluted with the ordinary form of "Good-day to you," and answering, "It is always a good day to me, for it is always the day that God sends"? And so we must learn to say, "It is a good day with me, though I am weary, or lonely, or oppressed, or in pain; for weariness and loneliness and oppression are God's sending, and behold, it is very good."

From the time when Rebekah said, "I am weary of my life because of the

daughters of Heth," the cry of "wearifull unto death" has been going up. But sometimes, perhaps, the cry would scarcely bear analysis; and even Mariana with her "melancholy eyes, the home of woe without a tear," and her hopeless sorrow, found when

> "All the crimson changed, and passed
> Into deep orange o'er the sea,
> Low on her knees herself she cast,"

that at last comfort came as

> "Weeping then she made her moan,
> 'The night comes in that knows not morn,
> When I shall cease to be all alone,
> To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'"

Some we have been privileged to know who could not only take their prolonged trial patiently, but even joy to watch that "undressing for the grave" of which Bishop Taylor speaks; grateful for the gradual unloosening of earth's cords; glad to feel that one by one the little ties that bound them were

loosened, and that, through many such blows of the great Sculptor's chisel, the perfect work was coming out, and the Master's purpose achieved.

I remember once, in a far-away inn in Styria, coming upon a little book, "My First Grey Hair," in which the tales of a peasant woman and a great Court lady were contrasted. But, contrary to the usual conventional treatment of such subjects, the great lady, after the startling moment of dismay at the first sign of change and decay, found help and consolation in this grey hair, which she carefully tended; and whenever vexations and worries rose in her gay life—as they plentifully did—she used to pass her finger over the lock, and say to herself, "What does it matter? *Ich werde grau*—I am growing grey, and all will soon pass away."

A great Spanish theologian, Alvarez,

has divided our earthly troubles under five heads, common to all alike, and apart from any volition; all of which, he says, we may turn into great blessings, if only we have the will so to do. The first arise from natural causes—bad weather, the troubles (and to some they are no trifles) of excessive cold and heat, of storm, of damp and gloom, and their relative effects; these must be met in the spirit of the *Benedicite:* "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord;" "O ye frost and cold, O ye winds of God, O ye winter and summer, bless ye the Lord." He sends His rain upon the earth and maketh it very plenteous; the wind and the storm fulfil His word.

The mediæval legend of Bishop Bruno going forth to say his office by the river-side, and harassed by the frogs' croaking, is full of teaching which we may carry on a little further. Mr.

Baring Gould has versified it most gracefully :—

"He could find,
Saying the Three Children's song
As he paced the bank along,
No tranquillity of mind.

"'O ye frogs! when Bishops praise
God, ye should amend your ways,
And be quiet for a while.'
Thus he spake, and at the word
They were silent, naught he heard.
He continued with a smile:

"'All ye green things on the earth,
Bless the Lord who gave you birth,
And for ever magnify.

* * * * * *

All ye teeming things that dwell
In the waters, praise as well,
And for ever magnify.'

"Sudden Bruno stopped. A flame
Started to his brow in shame,
As he did within debate.
'What! doth the Creator love
Praises from the things that move
And from things inanimate?

"'Fie upon me! Am I sure
My intent is half as pure,
Praises as acceptable,
As the strain, though loud and harsh,
Of these dwellers in the marsh?
What am I, that I can tell?'

"Turning to the swamp, he cried:
'Sitters by the waterside,
Do not ye your hymns forego.
I release you from the ban.
Praise the God of frog and man—
Cantate fratres Domino.'"

The second class of this world's troubles arises out of the infirmities of human nature, hunger and thirst, weariness, exhaustion, sickness, and the like. The third, from the inevitable antagonisms which arise between us and our fellow-men, and the difficulties surrounding human relationships — the quarrelsome, or peevish, or tedious, or hasty persons with whom it is our lot to live, and who are for ever irritating and fretting us. Pascal's remark that

if we have a neighbour with a sore leg or hand, we take pains not to jostle or bruise him—why not as much pains to avoid collision with the known sore temper or sensitiveness of another neighbour? applies forcibly to this category of ills. The fourth class consists of the insolence, contempt, or injustice we are liable to meet with in the world; perhaps to some rather the misapprehension, want of sympathy or forbearance, the misrepresentations and little slights which come to all, even sometimes from those they love. But all these, says Alvarez, are so many little messengers fulfilling their office, which is to lead you to rest upon your Lord. They are fulfilling their mission —do not complain of them. And the last class consists of the spiritual trials of dulness, distractions, scruples, dryness, and temptations, which at times beset all who are faithfully striving to

serve God. If we could but look upon everything of this sort as simply an element of sanctification—as one little step in the ladder leading out of earth's poor wearinesses—how different they would all seem! There is still a higher aim, and that is to look upon all that life brings of endurance as something to be offered to God, so that we may learn to say, as a saintly companion of S. Teresa once said, "I rejoice in the prolongation of my exile and its trials, because so long as we are on earth we are permitted to offer somewhat to God by patience and endurance; and since life at longest is short, and there will be all eternity for enjoyment, it is surely better to live long and bear much for the love of God."

VII.

It is sometimes useful, when we are inclined to murmur at the troubles which beset our ordinary lives, to call to mind the innumerable faults and imperfections of which we have been guilty since childhood, to say nothing of all those we do not remember, and then to ask ourselves whether we do not need much "purging of affliction." How often it is the prick of some pain which brings to mind the sin:—the hasty word or unkind judgment of ourselves which makes us remember our own want of love and charity towards others; the selfish egotism of a neighbour which reminds us of our own selfishness; the want of thought or

consideration which brings to mind the many times we have failed in tenderness and indulgence to others. It is a wise suggestion, that whenever we are jarred by others, we should turn our thoughts from them by asking God's forgiveness for all our own faults of a like kind, by which we have made our brother to offend. So sleepless nights have caused some to remember and ask pardon for the sloth of past days; incapacity for exertion recalls the wasted powers or misapplied strength; solitariness, the abuse of social intercourse by idle or uncharitable talk, and so forth.

No doubt it is trying and painful when our own follies and faults become whips which scourge us, but is it not better so to have it, and patiently and penitently to put them away, rather than to have all such faults left for the Great Day of reckoning? These troubles,

inward or external, patiently borne, may become priceless blessings. There is a lovely story told by some mediæval preacher, of a child trying to make his confession, and weeping so over his faults that he could not utter them. Then the priest gave him a slate, and bade him write down what he wanted to say; and as he wrote, his tears washed out the words, and when he held up the slate, behold, nothing was there but the great tear-blots. And then the priest bade him go in peace, for of a truth his tears had washed out the faults in God's Sight.

Practically we are all apt to complain of the special trouble which is visiting us, as though it came by chance; after a fashion saying to God, "Not now—another time I shall be ready to suffer and repent, but to-day I want to enjoy myself; it is hard that I cannot." Yet to-day's work, if not carried out, may

never have another chance, and the shaping and moulding this series of little secret pains and humiliating worries has to perform may be lost for ever if not done now, or if we, in our recklessness, resist the Hand which so lovingly is laid upon us. Moreover, it is useless to resist; we can no more drive away the succession of tiny troubles and worries, and hopes and vexations, which each day in the order of God's Providence brings, than we can drive away the cloud of gnats which meets us beneath the elm trees as we walk towards the summer sunset. We may pass through them, and cleave our way to the glow they obstruct, but it must be a passing through. How many people have observed in themselves or others that the thing of which they have said, "I hope that trouble will never come to me; I am sure I could never endure such and such a

thing," has been the very trial laid upon them, and through which they have eventually learnt their most precious lessons—come most closely to their Lord? Ah, if there be one thing of which we are tempted to say, "I cannot give *that* up; I cannot bear *that*," surely it ought to be the subject of our daily prayers, of our frequent communions, of our most earnest self-struggles, to lay it as wholly at the Dear Master's Feet as all else; until it shall be no mere form of words, but the heart's most deliberate intention, with which we say, "Thy Will be done."

The expression "this valley of tears" has become almost a platitude. It is a pity, for there is great beauty in the idea of man going along his path weeping, sorrow and sacrifice springing up from the earthly soil he treads—life hard and laborious in one sense or another to all: from the child wearying

over its lessons; the toil of intellectual or physical labour to the youth, of maternity to the young wife; to the old man striving with his last infirmities till death shall set him free. And the fact leaves its impression on our thoughts and characters. There are some who make their own lives and those of others dreary, by always anticipating and awaiting trouble and discomfort. Await them, indeed, we should, with cheerful acquiescence in what God may send, and as not knowing what a day may bring forth; but never await evil in the lower sense of foreboding and mistrust. Like everything else, gloominess and mistrust become a habit, and of all bad habits what can tend more to our own misery and that of all around than one of gloom? When tears *must* be shed, try to remember that "they who sow in tears shall reap in joy;" think of the legend which tells how tears shed

here in love and patience, are found strung as pearls hereafter. Look at the April sunshine, bursting forth almost before the shower has ceased, with growth and gladness irrepressible, and let the warmth of God's spiritual sun do the like for you. It will, if you do not reject it. And ponder over the words of our truest Christian poet—

"An hour ago the storm was here,
The gleam was far behind.
So will our joys and griefs appear
When earth has ceased to blind.

"Grief will be joy, if on its edge
Fall soft that holiest ray;
Joy will be grief, if no faint pledge
Be there of heavenly day."

VIII.

"It is past." Of how many things this is our cry; and, as Dr. Newman says in one of his sermons, "Nothing that is past can ever possibly happen again precisely in a similar way." But, because it is past, and never can return, the effects and results are not also past; these, as the men of science tell us concerning the vibration of sounds, never die away, but are perpetually travelling round us and the world we live in, influencing and to influence us so long as time shall last. Every small trial, every act of impatience or irritability, every selfish impulse resisted or yielded to, every hearty effort after loving trust in

the wisdom that tries us, every cowardly shrinking back into desponding faithlessness, each and all leave their stamp on the soul for ever.

The want of an object in life is a complaint we sometimes hear from those whose circumstances do not afford the interests given to others. How would it be if these objectless people would make an object of considering how all their ways and words are shaping their own eternity, and that of those around them? If we could look into the invisible, and see how our daily doings are moulding that eternity for good or evil, I think we should never complain of the want of an object. It is not merely the greater lines of life that do this; it is the almost imperceptible shading of insignificant matters (if anything were really insignificant!) which influences us and our surroundings. Who has not felt that some

chance conversation, perhaps not intended for them to hear, even, has told upon their whole future? Who does not remember the impression made in childhood by some unselfish or noble word or deed, which perhaps was so entirely natural and simple that the speaker was all unconscious of having said or done anything noticeable? or, alas, the sadder stamp left by some hard, unreal, or inconsistent act, which perhaps for years gave just the encouragement needed by a hesitating mind to choose the evil and leave the good? And how many have carried through life a poignant regret because of some little deed or word, which they would give all they possess to unsay or leave undone, but which remains a perpetual sting even when sincere repentance has put away whatever may have been the wrong?

"Almost twenty years since" (wrote

Dr. Fuller, more than two hundred years ago) "I heard a profane jest, and still remember it. How many pious passages of far later date have I forgotten!"

But the past has many treasures, which the invalid and the sorrowful may especially prize. A good memory is indeed a special gift to these, for when blindness (or many an ailment short of that which makes the free use of eyesight no longer possible) comes, the advantage of a stored memory is incalculable. I remember being impressed very deeply by hearing how, when Archbishop Howley was dying, and he could neither bear to be read to nor to have a light near, his chaplain, who was as a son to him, used to lie on the bed beside him, repeating psalm after psalm in a low monotone, to the infinite solace of the venerable man. Poetry of various kinds, which is easily

learnt, can be stored to a great extent in this way, as well as Holy Scripture, and a practised memory will go on to other things. Then, in long wakeful nights, or lonely evenings, and solitary walks, there is always companionship at hand; and, moreover, when depressing thoughts, or thoughts of any kind which we desire to resist and put away, arise; nothing is a better defence than the power of bringing beautiful and encouraging ideas before the mind in their place, and the mental exercise of doing so is in itself strengthening and healthful. To those who are gifted with any musical power, it is in like manner most valuable to have the command of a store of melody in memory; the dull or sad hours that can be cheered by playing from recollection, the gloomy thoughts that can be dispersed, and brighter imaginations awakened, are untold.

I have known persons subject to fits of great depression, who found help in bringing to their mind's vision, by a vigorous act of memory, the exact detail of any very beautiful scenery, or picture, statue, or building they had seen, and to whom the treasures of the Louvre, the Brera, the Vatican, or the National Gallery, thus became really a possession, a medicine for the sick man. But this requires so much imagination, you will say? Well, are you not exercising your imagination powerfully in depression, only by conjuring up troubles and wearinesses, instead of bright, soothing things? Don't despise the help your imagination can supply; it is a gift of God: and don't let it drag you in the wrong direction; you have no right to misuse it. It has been said by one, whose writings have done more to teach our generation than that generation realizes—John Ruskin

—that "when the imagination and feelings are strongly excited, they will not only bear with strange things, but they will look into minute things with a delight quite unknown in hours of tranquillity."

People, English people especially, have been too apt to talk of imagination almost with depreciation, as though it were a delusion, the encouraging of some unreality, and as though the mind that fostered its imagination must necessarily be wanting in the practical, truthful side of things. Surely this is a great mistake. Let me again quote Mr. Ruskin as to the moral power of the imagination. Speaking of it with respect to love, he says, "It is the gradual increase of the imaginative faculty which exalts and enlarges the authority of the passion, until at its height, it is the bulwark of patience, the tutor of honour, and the perfectness

of praise. You will find, further, that as of love, so of all the other passions, the right government and exaltation begins in that of the Imagination, which is lord over them. For to *subdue* the passions, which is thought so often to be the sum of duty respecting them, is possible enough to a proud dulness; but to *excite* them rightly, and make them strong for good, is the work of the unselfish imagination. It is constantly said that human nature is heartless. Do not believe it. Human nature is kind and generous, but it is narrow and blind, and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately sees and feels. People would instantly care for others as well as themselves if only they could *imagine* others as well as themselves." And the great Art-philosopher goes on to speak of the "kingdom which every man holds in his conceptive faculty, to

be peopled with active thoughts and lovely presences, or left waste for the springing up of those dark desires and dreams of which it is written that 'every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil continually.' True, and a thousand times true it is, that here, at least, 'greater is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.'"

Make a rule, then, to yourself, that directly you find murmuring, or gloomy, or despondent thoughts—whatever, in a word, you comprehend under the class "depressing"—invading you, you will call upon the stores of your imagination, and bring forth all that is best and most beautiful, so that the demon of discontent and gloom may be ousted. Do not be disdainful of little things. If to-day the psalm or the noble poem, the Fra Angelico, or the hothouse blossoms which yesterday turned the current of your thoughts, are not at-

tainable or are powerless, do not give in. Try something else. Seek distraction and uplifting in whatever may produce them; the cheap photograph and the wayside flower will do it perhaps just as truly. Whether for ourselves or for others, we should never turn indifferently from any of God's sunshine. And there is real moral sunshine as well as material in every leaf and blossom, in every tinted cloud, in every wondrously framed and painted insect, all of which draw their colouring matter from the glorious life-giving sun.

Sydney Smith had three recipes for cheerfulness: one was to write on pink note-paper; another a box of bonbons on the chimney-piece, ready to hand; and the third, never to go to bed at night without being able to recall some act of kindness, great or small as it may be, done to another.

Probably the mind that can fix on

the last prescription will never find its own depression irremediable; and for those who are sceptical as to its effect, what can be said except, Let them try!

IX.

THERE are some of whom the world says that they were born to be unlucky, that their destiny has always been unfortunate. But the Christian says of such that pity for them is blended with awe and respect, because "the Hand of God has touched them" (Job xix. 21). A troubled life is a wholly different thing seen from this or that point of view. Even now, while the bruised, crushed limbs and heart ache, there are few, I imagine, who cannot more or less feel that the Father's Hand is guiding and restraining, and adapting the discipline of suffering. How much more hereafter shall we rejoice and give thanks for every link of the golden

chain, which, while it does indeed gall and chafe now, is gradually drawing us up to the Father's Bosom?

It is not unprofitable from time to time to make a review of one's past life, tracing what growth, what gain, has come to us out of those things which seemed most adverse, most distasteful. Even the little daily trifles which vex us often carry this visible stamp of being overruled. The wet day which spoilt some pet plan, caused you to be at home when some specially welcome visitor came; the illness which seemed so ill timed, opened out a store of kindness from people you did not think cared for you;—the unavoidable detention led to some most grateful acquaintance; or the uneasy consciousness of something amiss led you to real abiding sorrow for some sin, which else you would have glossed over until it was too late.

I once knew a person who, after a most happy life up to a certain time, came under the pressure of heavy sorrow; and I shall never forget the impression made by hearing her say that now, amid pain and bereavement and deprivation, she spent her wakeful nights "counting up her blessings." Most of us would find the account larger on the side of what we have received than the reverse, if we were honest with ourselves, and were ready to feel

> "Thankful for all God takes away,
> Humbled by all He gives."

In one sense, no doubt, a Christian's duty is to put away the things that are left behind, and look on; but while we ought to look back both in loving, trustful sorrow for past faults, and in deep gratitude for mercy and unmerited blessings received, so our looking on must be carefully watched, and not

suffered to degenerate into any mere anxious, nervous anticipation. The troubles that must surely come, it is well to leave calmly and trustfully in His Hand Who will not let them loose without simultaneous power and grace to bear them. What truer words could be written than Dr. Newman's, in the "Lyra Apostolica" many years ago—

> "Did we but see,
> When life first opened, how our journey lay
> Between its earliest and its closing day,
> Or view ourselves, as we one time shall be
> Who strive for the high prize, such sight would break
> The youthful spirit, though bold for Jesus' Sake."

The venerable Curé d'Ars, in his last days, said that if he could have foreseen all his trials from the beginning, he should have been crushed with fearfulness; and perhaps at the end of a long life most would honestly feel the same. But the troubles come one by one.

"One by one thy griefs shall meet thee,
Do not fear an armèd band:
One will fade, as others reach thee,
Shadows passing thro' the land.

"Do not look at life's long sorrow,
See how small each moment's pain;
God will help thee for to-morrow,
Every day begin again."

Looking back, we see the whole accumulated load of trouble, but practically we have only each moment's weight to bear. "That sorrow," says Jeremy Taylor, "is hugely tolerable which gives its smart but by instants and smallest proportions of time. No man at once feels the sickness of a week, or of a whole day, but the smart of an instant; and still every portion of a minute feels but its proper share, and the last groan ended all the sorrow of its peculiar burthen. And what minute can that be which can pretend to be intolerable? And the next minute is but the same as the last, and the

pain flows on like the drops of a river, or the little shreds of time; and if we do but take care of the present minute, it cannot seem a great charge or a great burthen; but that care will secure our duty, if we still but secure the present minute."

And so accepting life and its trials, if it should be God's Will that we attained even to the eighty and six years for which S. Polycarp served Him, we might be able to say with that great martyr, "Eighty-six years have I served my Master, and He has ever blessed me. How can I deny Him?"

It is a great matter in sickness, sorrow, or depression to remember the infinite help and comfort of new beginnings, to foster in ourselves the cheerful, pleasant hope that to-morrow will be better than to-day; nay, even if not better in the sense of relief to

what harasses us, yet at least better in our energetic courage to bear up against it. "God, by nature alike and by grace," says Dr. Pusey, "makes new beginnings the whole history of our being. We shall only know at the Judgment Day the value of these new beginnings which God gives us daily, by the very disposition of day and night, and the necessity of sleep. We can have no thought what we should lose, if we could dispense with sleep, and prolong day into day, by the loss of new beginnings. What a world of life and strength there is in our fresh self-oblation every morning! What a mercy to have had yesterday past, with its wearinesses and its failures and its burdens, to have had its venial sins washed out by the Lord's Prayer, and to begin anew with self-devotion to Jesus. . . . Every three years we have a thousand of such new beginnings."

And if sometimes we feel for the moment quite overpowered, and as though there were no spring, no power of resistance left, it is surely a help, while "folding patient hands on patient, suffering breast," to say to ourselves that the great pressure will not last. As surely as the sun sinks to his rest, so surely will he rise again to-morrow; and with the fresh light and air of morning, a new phase will come to us too—either our burden will be eased, or the reinvigorated, refreshed forces will have greater strength. Even Good Friday itself brought the stillness of evening to the pierced heart of Mary and her faithful companions, and the hope which must have been so heavily crushed, so cleaving to the dust on that day of agony, must have sprung anew on the peaceful morn of the first Easter Eve.

Doubtless it is no small trial to live

in a perpetual state of feeling one's strength unequal to cope with the demands upon it; daily to be constrained to leave undone what we fain would do, or leave it to be done by others—those others perhaps showing plainly that they do not altogether believe in our powerlessness, or that they think a little more energy and resolution on our part would conquer it. Perhaps this may be true, and if so, however little palatable, it is a good tonic which braces us to try; but more probably it is not so. You are really unfit to meet the strain; you have a sort of hopeless consciousness that your moral strength is enfeebled as well as that which is physical, and it is hard not to give way to fretfulness and depression. Perhaps one of the first comforts to take is in words very familiar to you—so familiar, it may be, as to have almost lost their point—"When

I am weak, then am I strong." Do not measure your strength, your *real* strength, I mean, by what you *feel.* Bishop Butler, in the "Analogy," explains that the eye is only the channel or instrument by which the knowledge of the thing seen is carried to the real living faculty of perception—which exists, whether the mere external instrument be preserved or destroyed; and so your will to serve the Lord, and to accept and do His Will, exists independently of the visible strength of limbs and nerves which enables you to do certain things. It may be that the will is strongest, at all events most absolutely used to His service and glory, when the machinery which it ordinarily moves is quite incapable.

There is no good in questioning why, your duties being as clamorous as ever, God deprives you of the power of fulfilling them. Be content to leave

that to His wisdom. Some day you may see wisdom and love regulating the deprivations, which are at present imperceptible to you, and then you will realize that the lessons of helplessness had a meaning. For the time be content with striving to send up, amid your physical exhaustion, such prayer as is possible to you. It may be no more than the lifting of the heart in one word or thought; but that is enough for Him Who sees every pulsation, every quiver of your weary eyelids. No need to frame a word; there is no possible state of prostration so great that the Father's Eye cannot see the fluttering movement directed towards His love; and be certain that He will send the Comforter, and, when it is well for you, renewed strength. Holiness is your one desire; then let Him shape and mould you to it, in His own way. And do not be over solicitous as

to what other people think. If you are really unable to make the exertions they think desirable and possible, the fact will probably prove itself to their minds soon; if not, accept the misapprehension as a part of the discipline God is laying on you, and do not neutralize it by fretfulness or irritability. Only guard against lapsing into a habit of self-indulgence, moral as much as physical. It is one thing to leave some duty unfulfilled through weakness and positive incapacity; another to shrink back from the exertion because it gives us pain and discomfort; and it is not well to fancy our own dislike to doing what costs that effort, to be God's withholding Hand.

It is wonderful how much most people can do with respect to what they wish and like, and perhaps bystanders sometimes form rather harsh conclusions from seeing this, and infer that we could be

more energetic than we are if we chose. As in most other things, whether of sickness or health, the particular question has at last to be decided by an honest attempt to look at it as God sees it, and strive to hear and comply with His guiding Voice. But of many invalids it cannot with justice be said that they make all the exertion on the side of usefulness, and absence of complaint that would be practicable. Perhaps one of the best voluntary forms of self-discipline an invalid can undertake, is that of checking the tendency to lamentation over self, detailing woes and discomforts, perpetual talking of their own troubles; in short, all that promotes self-concentration.

It is so difficult when there is not much else to think about, and when you are oppressed and wearied by these discomforts?

Of course it is, or there would be no discipline in the process. But the attempt will become easier as you persevere, and will certainly bring its own reward. Try to throw yourself into the thoughts and cares of others, to fix your attention and interest on them and their wants, and you will be surprised to find how much lighter it makes your own load, to say nothing of the way in which it attracts them to you, and thereby helps to fill up the sense of privation and isolation, which is often so trying a part of an invalid's life.

I have known sick-rooms where all, family and friends, clustered, as the one place where they were certain to find fresh, warm sympathy in every joy or sorrow; a kindly, patient hearing for every difficulty and perplexity, and often a quickened, more refined apprehension of needs and troubles than the

more buoyant, self-occupied friend can give. Sir Arthur Helps says ("Friends in Council") that the armchair of the sick or of the old may be "the centre of the house," around which all family hopes and cares gather and are met. If this could be the general rule of invalids, we should not so often hear the complaint of being "set aside," or of so much depression or "nervousness." These often arise from a want of wholesome outer interests—from over self-concentration, which distorts and exaggerates nervous discomforts till they become almost intolerable. Sir Henry Holland, in his "Chapters on Physiology," tells us how any one can increase the beating of the heart several pulsations in a minute by merely concentrating their attention upon its action; and it is the same with all our physical and moral nature. The self-absorbed increase their own actual

suffering, while those who acquire the happy power of putting self aside are more than rewarded by an actual lessening of their own evils, as well as by the kindly feeling attracted to them in the process.

Of course, occupation is the greatest of all possible helps to the life of the invalid, the lonely, or the low-spirited, though, for one reason or another, it is often the hardest prescription to carry out. Nor is it possible to lay down rules for such occupation. One invalid can employ his or her head for hours, although all locomotion or talking may be impracticable. Another can bear but the slightest brain-work or excitement, whose hands are fit for a variety of useful pursuits. But it is wonderful how many charitable schemes are at present being almost entirely worked from a sick-room, and how much useful organization and detail can be managed

there. Of course, if it is possible to be occupied rather for others than for one's self, it is in every way to be preferred, and brings far greater solace and good to the doer. And the old saying about a will and a way is all-powerful here; the will is almost certain to lead to the way. At all events, let no one give up the attempt after useful occupation of some sort until they are quite certain that they have honestly tried every possible resource from whence it could be obtained, and let them be sure that the occupation is not merely rejected because they do not care for that particular thing—because it bores them, or fails to interest them, or produces some quite unimportant inconvenience. Ten minutes at a time, given to some such unacceptable occupation, will often do more towards driving away "nerves," or depression, than any one who has not tried it could suppose possible; and

as the habit of doing what we do not like is formed, it will bring a wonderful sense of vigour and reality, because it is, however trifling, an offering up of self to God's service, and therein obtains His Blessing. And the more self is set aside, and put away, and forgotten, the nearer we rise to Him Who has made us for HIMSELF. We all crave for holiness, and it has been truly said that "holiness is the unselfing of self."

X.

It may not be a cheerful subject for reflection, but it surely is a profitable one, to consider how much that troubles and depresses us comes from our own fault. Some people lament that they are not cared for, not sought; that their surroundings are indifferent to them; that they are not consulted, or trusted, or made much of. If so, would it not be well, however humiliating the process, to examine themselves strictly, and see how much of this is the inevitable consequence of their own acts? We have most of us a lively imagination, prone to take rapid shape in thoughts not always kind, or just, or charitable, and these in their turn too often express themselves in words open

to a like accusation, if not in such deeds as are the natural outcome of all unweighed, crude impressions. Vanity, self-interest, jealousy, resentment, are all more liable to influence our opinion of and dealings with others than it is at all pleasant to admit to ourselves; and, being unpleasant, we put aside the wholesome conviction when forced upon us, and comforting ourselves with the certainty that we have a generally kind intention towards our neighbours, we forget what is *not* kind, and so contrive to slur over and ignore numberless small sins against those neighbours. But we do not so easily ignore their offences against us, and naturally they do not any more condone our faults than we theirs. So a little sense of coldness and irritation is set up; a tiny seed of resentment is sown, and thence misunderstandings, bitterness, and estrangement too often follow. We have no

patience with people who can garner up for angry remembrance some hasty word or sarcasm we uttered long since, or who persist in judging us by some folly of bygone years. Of course we have forgotten such unlovely things long ago, and we think our accusers malicious, if not untruthful, or at the least very uncharitable, to dwell upon them. Now turn the reflecting glass and see whether you are doing the same—whether your thoughts and verdicts are tinged by any such shadow? And if they are, try to get rid both of mote and beam. Forget whatever has been said or done that chafes you, and if it is possible, by kindness or humility, to efface a harsh impression, do so; and take most emphatically that "ounce of charity," of which S. Francis de Sales used to speak, and mix it freely in all you do and say. How many of the little rubs and sorenesses which em-

bitter life would be healed, or indeed never come into existence at all, if we all did this more!

"I sometimes feel," writes one striving to overcome the sadness and weariness of life, and to mount up on heavenward wings, "as if there must be some evil spirit taking delight in spiting me, in thwarting all my longings, and making everything go wrong. I want to win the spirit of Christian joy—what I imagine S. Paul to have meant by 'always rejoicing;' but that same demon lurks about and takes the cheerfulness out of me, and makes me depressed and cheerless and weary, with a world of little pricks and stings. One while it is that my friends forget me, or contradict me—unfair blame, vexatious silence or delay; or neglects which I know it is childish to care about, only I *do* care. And so it goes on. I am vexed at my own depression, and that

depresses me more. The more self-conscious I become, the more cross-grained events seem; and when I want to make short work of my worries and throw them off, they cling to me like burrs! All these petty vexations are like a path strewed with broken glass: step where I will, they scratch and pierce me. And then, worst of all, when one can hardly bear with one's self, people come in and deliver themselves of platitudes and conventionalities intended, I suppose, to admonish or comfort one; instead of which they make me simply savage with irritation, and I hate myself for being irritated; and so, after all, that spiteful demon—to whose malice I am referring all this, rather than to my own poor cowardly, selfish, perverse self—gets the victory, and I am as far from being a happy specimen of Christian joy as need be."

Perhaps a good many might have much the same to say, and there is nothing to be surprised at. We must take it for granted that unrest is to be the portion of this life, which is only a training and discipline for that where frets and worries will never harass us again. And it is some help to remember that though, probably, while actually resisting the irritation and discomfort, we can hardly be conscious of success—just as the dentist's ministrations can scarcely be said to give ease while in process—still the very fact of striving against the mischief proves that we are in earnest, and sooner or later the calm will come. Sometimes it is a help to think how such vexations and irritations must appear to our guardian angel, and to the angels of those who inflict them (for they too, I suppose, must have their guardian angels, and some strange things must sometimes

come before the angelic eyes, one would imagine). Again, it is a good thing to lay our trouble over little inevitable and intolerable things before God, and ask help under them. S. Francis de Sales says the very fact of our feeling half ashamed to bring such trifles before Him is a check upon over-indulgence in our annoyances. It is remarkable how much S. Francis dwells upon the intolerableness of *little* things. He is never inclined to make light of small troubles, small hindrances, or, we must add, small sins. All alike need patient dealing; but once make up one's mind to bear the "intolerable" calmly—so he teaches—and we shall acquire serenity and patience with the resolution, or, at least, ere long in trying to carry it out. If you cannot say truly, "I accept it willingly," at least say, "I *want* so to do." And as you bend before the blast it will pass

over, and you will be astonisl
find the sunshine creeping out, an
chill, harsh March wind melting into soft April breezes, all because love—not only His love to you, but your poor attempts at love for Him—are blending and sanctifying grief into joy, resistance into submission.

After all, a great many of our vexations and troubles are partly unreal—what we fear *may be*, more than what *is*. A very anxious-minded, self-tormenting person once in a great measure cured herself, by writing down a list of the worries which were harassing her by anticipation, and then sealing them up for a given time. At the end of the month, or whatever time was fixed for opening the record, it was marvellous to find how many alarms had entirely dissipated themselves, how few of the expected evils had come to pass, and how clear the "way of

escape" generally was in those that proved real.

Sometimes it is a good discipline for a fretful, complaining mind to tell its fears and worries to a friend, whose calm and true, though kindly judgment, carries a certain loving awe with it. It is astonishing how the intended complaints will slink away, ashamed of being brought to the light; how the grievances appear unworthy of utterance; how, in short, we see ourselves in another light altogether, when the focus of self-inspection is changed, and we half unconsciously begin to "see ourselves as others see us." But, then, we must not stop there. If we are ashamed that the friend we love should see this garden of moral weeds, have we no thought of shame for the unerring Eye which reads each querulous murmur before it has wellnigh shaped itself in the heart? How often we refuse to hear the Voice which is pleading—

"Child of My love, how have I wearied thee
Why wilt thou err from Me?
Raise thy repining eyes, and take true measure
Of thine eternal treasure."

There is a wonderful chapter in the "Imitation," "Of Comfort for the Desolate," which to read over on our knees might be a tower of strength in desolation and weariness.

"O Lord God, Holy Father, be Thou blessed both now and for evermore, because as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou doest is good.

"Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself nor in anything else; for Thou alone art the true gladness, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord.

"Thine are all things, both what Thou hast given and what Thou hast made. I am poor and in trouble from my youth, and sometimes my soul is sorrowful even unto tears; sometimes

also it is disturbed within itself by reason of sufferings which hang over me.

"I long for the joy of peace; the peace of Thy children I earnestly crave, who are fed by Thee in the light of Thy comfort.

"If Thou give peace, if Thou pour into my heart holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody, and shall become devout in Thy praise.

"But if Thou withdraw Thyself (as so oft Thou dost), he will not be able to run the way of Thy commandments; but rather he will bow his knees, and smite his breast, because it is not now with him as it was in times past, when Thy candle shined upon him, and under the shadow of Thy wings he was protected from the temptations which assaulted him. . . .

"O Father, meet and right it is that Thy servant should suffer something for Thy sake. . .

"It is well that he should be for a little while held cheap, and humbled, and in the sight of men should fail, and be wasted with sufferings and languors, that he may rise again with Thee in the morning dawn of the new light, and be glorified in heaven. Holy Father, Thou hast so appointed it, and so wilt have it; and that is fulfilled which Thyself hast commanded. . . .

"Without Thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing cometh to pass in the earth. It is good for me, Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy righteous judgments, and may cast away pride and presumption. . . .

"Thou knowest what is expedient for my spiritual progress, and how greatly tribulation serves to scour off the rust of my sins. . . .

"Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing; to love that

which is worth loving; to praise that which pleaseth Thee most; to esteem that which to Thee is precious; to abhor that which in Thy sight is foul. . . .

"'What every one is in Thy sight, that is he, and no more,' saith humble S. Francis."

And, as "things old and new" alike vibrate on the same chord, a living teacher says: "Why, when your health and wealth and time and opportunities are not actively misused for evil, are they so often frittered away? Simply for want of faith. You start in life with high ideals, and an exuberance of energy, but you have not courage to bring the two into relation; *i.e.* you have not faith. Your ideals are like the visions that float before the artist; they are unreal to begin with. But you are endowed with a creative faculty, and can call them into existence by the bare fiat of your faith. You can *make*

them what they are not, as the heroes and saints have done before you; but you *will* not, and so you allow the God-sent vision of your destiny to fade away unfulfilled, till in the end it will be nothing more to you than the melancholy memory of some sunrise long ago. It is the same with life's other aspect; its sickness, and pain, and sorrow. It comes to you with a message full of spiritual meaning; but you are not on the look-out for spiritual meaning at the time, even if you are in the habit of looking for it elsewhere, as in the course of human history, or the aspect of the natural world; you suffer the sudden transition to put the eye of your faith out of focus, and fail to recognize spirit when it appears in this new disguise. You busy your thoughts at once with a host of secondary causes; the habit, or place, or indiscretion which may have brought your illness

on you, or the medicine, or diet, or change of air which you hope will soon take it away. You have not the faith to discard all these, and confront the reality which they conceal. You are like Asa, who, 'in his disease, sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.' And so the angel that was sent to give you patience, or insight, or recollection, or the one especial grace which was your need, passes away with the heavenly message which he brought you undelivered, and only leaves you one step nearer, but less ready for, your grave. And yet, if you had only known it, 'this sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' "*

* J. R. Illingworth.

XI.

I THINK it is Dr. Newman who speaks somewhere of the manifold troubles which arise in our daily life from "those who love us, as well as those who hate us;" the antithesis meaning, of course, not active hatred, but the negative of sympathy and friendliness. And family relations have been likened, caustically, but not with utter untruth, to a faggot of thorns; involving a continual prick and scratch, which, though slight, are often renewed, and having no time to heal, fester and spread as the dust and chill air of daily life comes in contact with them. How many people are there who in their nightly self-examination scarce give a thought

—from the right point of view—to the little irritations and vexations of the day! It is so much easier to think, "So-and-so was too tiresome, too intrusive, too uncourteous to-day. He is so thoroughly unpleasant, I shall take care to let him see what I think of him, or I shall keep well out of his way;" even sometimes, "I shall return such an act of discourtesy or unkindness, and he may see how he likes it!" It is so much easier to let such thoughts wander through one's mind than to ask, "Did I, by any heedlessness, or impatience, or want of consideration, lead my brother to offend? Has my want of lovingkindness or sympathy helped to leave a stain on a neighbour's conscience, which, like all stains, must leave its mark for ever?" Or, if we cannot accuse ourselves of having promoted the offence by our own want of tact or kindness, we may well ask,

"How would it be were my dearest Friend, my Lord, to be as quick to resent my lack of love, of consideration, of attention, of deference to Him? Has neither lip, nor eye, nor hand done anything to-day that might give offence to His jealous love?" The answer can hardly fail to be such as will draw forth the humble prayer, "Lord, forgive me that I have wronged Thee, and my brother wherein he seems to have wronged me." Such a prayer will not fail to loosen the thorny faggot; and, as in the old fable, it will soon be broken up, when once unloosed. "They who have touched but with one finger the Crown of Thorns," says S. Francis de Sales, "are not easily wounded by earthly briars."

The beautiful story of S. Giovanni Gualberto, familiar to those who have visited Florence, and have seen the spot where he learnt a great lesson

of Christian forgiveness, has been of singular help to one or two resentful souls. His brother having been assassinated, Gualberto held it his bounden duty to avenge the crime, and one Good Friday, coming down to Florence from S. Miniato, at a narrow turn of the lane he met the murderer, and was about to kill him. Then the guilty man threw himself at the young knight's feet, and spreading out his arms crosswise, asked mercy in the Name of Him Who, as on that day, forgave His enemies. Gualberto's heart was touched, and he led the man back to S. Miniato, where, as they knelt together before the crucifix, the Saviour's Head was bowed in loving commendation upon him. Thus the young noble's whole life was changed; he became a religious, and soon after founded the well-known monastery of Vallombrosa. The crucifix has been moved to Sta. Trinita in

Florence; and there still, from time to time, some frail heart, yearning to attain a fuller spirit of forgiveness towards those who have wronged it, kneels in prayer, which, if not with a visible sign, will assuredly be no less truly answered than that of the eleventh-century warrior-saint.

Kindness, the fellow-feeling for those like ourselves, is a greater factor in the world than some seem ready to admit. It has been defined as the overflowing of self upon others, and therein partakes largely of that image and likeness of God in which we are made. The lovingkindness of God is one of the first things which draw us to Him; and every act of kindness we can do brings us nearer to His likeness, and makes us fellow-workers with Him.

If people whose tendency is to be depressed and fretful, to think little good of those around, and to believe

themselves incapable of doing much in the world they live in, would only make a deliberate study and pursuit of kindness, they would be astonished to find the brightening results in their own life. They would find that kindness has an untold power of developing not only its like, but actual good in others. Just as the sun, in the old fable, caused the traveller to throw open his cloak, when the cold wind only made him fold it closer round him, so a kind act or word, sometimes merely a kind look, has a magic power to dispel moral clouds, and to bring forth rainbows where we fancied there was naught save storm. The often-quoted lines, which tell us that—

> "Oft a word at random spoken,
> Will heal or bruise a heart half-broken,"

contain a moral which never can grow old.

"We all of us," says Dr. Faber, "need encouragement to do good. The path of virtue, even when it is not uphill, is rough and stony; and each day's journey is a little longer than our strength admits of, only there are no means of shortening it. The twenty-four hours are the same to everybody except the idle, and to the idle they are thirty-six, for weariness and dulness. You may love God, and love Him truly, and high motives may be continually before you. Nevertheless, you must be quite conscious to yourself of being soon fatigued, nay, perhaps of a normal lassitude growing with your years; and you must remember how especially the absence of sympathy tried you, and how all things began to look like delusion because no one encouraged you in your work. Alas, how many noble hearts have sunk under this not ignoble weakness! How many

plans for God's glory have fallen to the ground, which a bright look or a kind eye would have propped up! But either because we were busy with our own work, and never looked at that of others, or because we were jealous, and looked coldly and spoke critically, we have not come with this facile succour to the rescue, not so much of our brother, as of our dearest Lord Himself. . . . But if we have no notion of the far-reaching mischief which unkindness does, so neither can we rightly estimate the good which kindness may do. Very often a heart is drooping. It is bending over itself lower and lower. The cloud of sadness thickens. Temptations lie all around, and are multiplying in strength and number every moment. Not so much as a kind action, not so much as a kind word, but the mere tone of voice, the mere fixing of the eye, has conveyed

sympathy to the poor suffering heart, and all is right again in one instant. The downcast soul has revived under that mere peep of human sunshine, and is encouraged to do bravely the very thing which in despondency it had almost resolved to leave undone. That coming sin might have been the soul's first step to an irretrievable ruin. That encouragement may be the first link of a new chain, which, when its length is finished, shall be called final perseverance."

It is a cheerful, joyous thought that kindness is so fertile, that it is ever spreading out its branches; and one kind act is sure to produce many more, often to make its recipient kind, who perhaps was scarcely so before. It may be that the kindness you showed to-day, half reluctantly, and with an effort, perhaps thinking it hardly worth the trouble, will never cease, but its

vibrations may go on encircling the world, as philosophers tell us sounds do. And what a return it makes to those we are specially thinking of, who, from suffering, sickness, or some other trouble, are lonely and depressed! A kind person is never self-occupied, and half our miseries in this life are because we are so terribly self-occupied—unfortunately, for the most part, in a wrong way; that is to say, we are not occupied with the endeavour to conquer our faults and rise to God, but with our petty grievances and wrongs and discomforts. But the moment we begin to think about others, and to strive to be kind, our own woes lose half their import.

To quote Dr. Faber again, "If we were habitually to put a kind interpretation on all we saw and heard, and habitually had kind thoughts of every one of whom we thought at all, it

would not merely put a new face on life, it would put a new depth to it. We should almost become other creatures. Look what an amount of bitterness we have about us! What is to become of it? Clearly we cannot take it into heaven. Where must it be left behind? . . . Certainly one very important feature there will be the absence of all bitterness and criticism, and the way in which our expanded minds will be possessed with thoughts of the most tender and overflowing kindness."

Even the sick and sorrowful, the most helpless in seeming, have their own channels of kindness. Perhaps a kind listener is, at some stages of our life, as great a blessing as can be found; and the tender kindness which listens without impatience, abstraction, or the self-occupation which hurries to relieve itself by telling you its own

experiences instead of replying to yours, is a precious and rare gift, more often found in those who have suffered and are suffering than elsewhere. It is a difficult ministration, no doubt. Your pain or grief is real, terribly real, you feel; and you are called on to listen kindly to a grief which seems, perhaps is, very imaginary; or the obvious selfishness of the speaker grates harshly on you. But you have done Christ's work when you have listened patiently and poured the balm of peace-making or sacrifice into another's heart; and it is strange if your own has not been lightened while so doing.

On the other hand, perhaps the self-restraint which enables a person suffering from depression to avoid as far as possible making others sad, will be his best cure. Faber says that those who go about communicating their low spirits to others are like demons, poison-

ing the fountains of joy. "Have I more light because I have managed to involve those I love in the same gloom as myself? Is it not pleasant to see the sun shining on the mountains, even though we have none of it down in our valley? . . . But while we hide our pains and sorrows, let them be spurs within us to urge us on to all manner of overflowing kindness and sunny humour to those around. When the very darkness within creates a sunshine around us, then has the Spirit of Jesus taken possession of our souls."

And once more: "No one carries his own cross wholly. Now, kind suffering makes us habitually look rather at what others feel of our crosses, than at what we feel of them ourselves. We see our crosses on other people's shoulders. It is not we, who have been tossing wakeful all night, that are the sufferers, but the poor nurse who has been fight-

ing all night against the sleep of health by our bedside, and only with partial success. It is not we, who cannot bear the least noise in the house, that deserve sympathy, but the poor little constrained children who have not been allowed to make the noise. For to children is there any happiness which is not also noise? This is the turn of mind which kindness in suffering gives us."

XII.

YOUR position is a very labyrinth of difficulty; turn where you may, there seems neither light nor outlet. Sometimes it is better not to hesitate, but to walk straight through obstacles, which yield before a bold approach. But such complications as you are suffering under can neither be faced nor endured save with much prayer. It is marvellous how prayer supplies our lack of experience, and helps us to perceptions of which we are naturally quite devoid.

S. Louis of Gonzaga used to say that he had never commended any perplexity, great or small, to God without finding his way out. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Prayer cannot fail to

take away the irritation, the coldness, the constraint, which you feel to be increasing your difficulty. Life is full of providential moments, which we cannot now interpret, but which assuredly are all-powerful as regards our souls. But then, we must be very cautious lest we reject them in our peevishness or self-seeking. It is always safe, under a disagreeable condition of things, or a harassing trial, to consider what hidden treasure lies beneath. Perhaps there is some duty which you are neglecting, greatly to the peril of your soul; or some snare into which you are falling, so easily and pleasantly that you do not perceive it; but now you are pulled up before a sort of moral barrier, and are forced to study the ground, and you see the almost inevitable fall ahead. A spiritual "salle d'attente" is a very gracious thing, says some French writer. No doubt we

should make fewer mistakes, and say fewer mistaken things than we do, if we were forced to make occasional sojourns there.

People *are* very provoking; but did it ever occur to you that perhaps this vexatious person had contrived to restrain himself a score of times before this occasion when he broke his self-restraint? and is it not possible that he, on his side, feels you to be as irritating to him as he is to you? And are there no good points in his character, even in his personal relations with you, which you could contrive to dwell on? Will you leave it to God only to take his efforts to do right into consideration? Suppose the angels were to become your inexorable accusers before God, with as much tenacity as you in your heart sometimes accuse your neighbour; how would it be with you? Meanwhile, God not only bears with

your failings; oftentimes He seems to pass them over, or at any rate He makes them gradually, tenderly known to you, in order not to discourage you. Beware of misusing His indulgence and construing it into a token of your own freedom from faults. It is a very awful thought, that perhaps our neighbour's sin would not exist were we ourselves something different to what we are; or that it may be God is waiting for us to become what He would have us be, to make that neighbour what we desire. It is such a truism to say that our neighbour's faults are of less import to our sanctification than our own, and yet we often speak and act as if it were quite the reverse. Undoubtedly, there are seasons and cases when we are bound to strive after our neighbour's correction, but such cases are for the most part very obvious; and when no such duty exists, we shall be wiser, as

we shall certainly be happier, if we restrain all appearance of sitting in judgment; as far as possible, all thought about them beyond what may help us to shun similar errors.

XIII.

HABIT goes a long way in our spiritual life, as well as in that which is external. People to whom suffering is an unwonted thing are often excited, irritated, almost rebellious under its touch. But surely this is not wise, for few lives go on far without their portion of suffering, and it is easier—not to say more—to take it quietly. "The heart's agony is our daily bread," it has been said; and if it pleases God to feed us with such bitter nourishment, we need not doubt that it is meant to promote our soul's health, and that the regimen will be effectual if we do not resist it. Sometimes it will help not a little to make a

practice of every morning offering up the trials or vexations from within or without—the bodily pains or mental depression which may come upon us through the day—so, as it were, being forearmed against the "troubles that must surely come," and taking them quietly, and not as a matter of surprise or struggle.

One who was tried during a long season by the sense of exceeding weariness of life, absence of pleasure and savour in it, powerlessness to enjoy anything, or to look on hopefully,—found the greatest help in dividing each day as it came into so many parts; as from waking to nine o'clock, the hour of our Lord's sentence; thence to midday, His crucifixion; then to six p.m., when He was laid in the sepulchre (or any other like divisions); and so bearing on from one to another till the dreary day was gone, and evening

brought the sufferer "a day's march nearer home."

To say each morning, "I *must* have things weariful, painful, to bear to-day, and they shall all be offered up beforehand as my heart's sacrifice; they shall be, not fought against, but received calmly and as welcome, for His Sake Who suffers them to come," gives a dignity, a purpose, nay, a very joy to what otherwise is all cheerless annoyance. Perhaps some of us, in our daily self-examinations, might dwell more on the helps and brightnesses sent us than we do. Sins to confess—true; but mercies sent: that kind letter which brought such a glow of sympathy with it; that pleasant book, with just the very idea that was helpful at the time; the flower brought by a little child; the song of a bird thrilling through our heart; the sunset glow; or, it may be, the mere sight, as we

passed, of some one we love ;—all these, and a hundred such, lighten the load of daily life, and therein should "bring us nearer God."

From the days when our grandfathers read the tale, which now seems so stiff and formal, "Eyes and No Eyes," to our own, when Mr. Ruskin has taught us to see grace and beauty and spiritual meaning in all natural objects around—in the dust and the crystal, in the cloud and the cliff—it has been the same; the willing heart reads God in everything, and reading, is cheered and comforted. Nor must we necessarily point to the Alps or the Lakes, or the "favoured haunts" of poetry, to find the solace and the uplifting; the heart and eye that seeks, finds. There is music from the blacksmith's anvil, and a cheering picture in his glowing fire, as we pass on a dull autumn evening; and poetry in the little golden tuft of

stonecrop on the old red-tiled roof opposite; and thoughts too deep for words may be kindled within us by one little death-struck bird.* Every hazel tassel and daisy, and sunflower turning to its God, and vine tendril clinging, has its own quiet comfort and joy to give; and the invalid or sufferer who has Wordsworth, and Keble, and Tennyson (not to say many more) stored in his memory, will never find any hour or

* "Sad and sorrowful. A little linnet was killed by flying against the conservatory. —— brought it in, soft and warm, just dead. I thought of the 'sparrow which falls to the ground,' and my heart was full of love to the little bird to which God had given the wondrous gift of life, so essentially His own gift; and now, in an instant, had painlessly, and in its upward flight, withdrawn it. How it makes me feel the nearness of His Hand, and how also realize *His* love, if *I* could feel positive love for the little stranger bird, merely because it, like myself, is His fashioning! Love is a wondrous thing, and one will only understand it rightly when the mortal has put on immortality."—*From a Journal.*

place wholly unproductive of images and chords to brighten and elevate his thoughts.

I remember a dark hour being wonderfully lightened by the accident of coming upon a little withered soldanella in a book, on the margin of which was scribbled in pencil an extract from Mr. Ruskin's "Modern Painters":—"If passing to the edge of a sheet of snow upon the lower Alps early in May, we are sure to find two or three little round openings pierced in it, and through these emergent a slender, pensive, fragile flower, whose small dark, purple-fringed bell hangs down and shudders over the icy cleft that it has cloven, as if partly wondering at its own recent grave, and partly dying of fatigue after its hard-won victory. And it utters a call for sympathy, offers an image of moral purpose and achievement, which cannot be heard without affection, nor

contemplated without worship, by any whose heart is rightly tuned, or whose mind is clearly and surely sighted."

The habit of mind which looks upon all such stray brightnesses and solaces as coming from the loving Hand of that Dear Lord Who is ever ready to comfort His weak children "as one whom his mother comforteth," is a habit to cultivate beyond expression. It gives a different meaning to everything in life; the tiny joys and sorrows have a purpose, are messages; the savourless, blank sense of loneliness and weakness vanishes, and we enter into the meaning of the lines—

"Thou art in the least flower that looks to Heaven;
And art Thou not in that heart's inmost scroll
That leans on Thee, forgiving as forgiven,
Despised but not despising, while the soul
Doth man herself in growing self-control?
From weakness felt in dungeons of dim night
Gathering immortal sinew, to unroll
And nerve her wing to bear the mighty flight,
And cleanse her eye to stand the blaze of Heaven's light."

"I sometimes pray" (a person heavily tried with "variegated sorrow" writes), "not for any particular help or definite comfort, but that, if it is my dear Lord's Will, He would send me some little bright, pleasant thing to cheer me, and help me to look up through the clouds—'Help me to find pleasure in my work;' and it is wonderful how surely the help is given. Somebody comes in and says just the right word of sympathy or encouragement; or a chance circumstance proves that one's work has been useful to a fellow in the struggle of life; or somebody whose love one dearly prizes, only one feels too insignificant to ask it, gives a passing token of caring for one; or, opening a book at hazard, some wonderful bit of sympathy from a long since dead, or a wholly unknown living author, quickens one's energies; or the evening light falls on the spire, and, glowing with no earthly ray, lifts up

one's whole heart out of the pettiness and poverty of one's own solitary, downcast life."

I remember going to the room of an old and most saintly person just at the moment when he most urgently needed help; and his reply to the remark, "I am so glad I came; it was quite by accident," stamped itself on my mind. "My dear, did you ever do anything quite by accident?"

XIV.

LANGUOR is a trouble added to the rest, which it is difficult for the healthy and vigorous to appreciate. Yet perhaps it is one of the most helpful parts of that discipline, the object of which is to liken us to our Lord. The thought of His weariness, as He sat by the well in Samaria, becomes a shelter then such as more buoyant life cannot realize. But we need much prayer to win strength out of the languid weakness of the body. "All the hopes of my early days are gone out," a Frenchwoman writes, "and life, with saddened reality, depresses me sorely. Everything has faded, and I am perfectly aware that it is even so with myself. I

too am growing colourless and grey, like my life. If I were an exile in Siberia, I suppose I should not attach myself closely to my surroundings—I should be always thinking how to bear on patiently till I could get away; and this is what I want to aim at in life. But I am always trying to throw out permanent roots, and being thrown back in languid despair because they are torn up." And another says, "What a life I have spent in dreading that future which has now actually come to pass, and is my present! But when I forecast the blanks and sorrows which are now realities, I did not know how my life would become as a lamp into which God would continually pour the consolation of suffering for Him. That healing oil strengthens me, even while sorrow consumes my bodily strength."

But such consolations must be

sought with the life's prayer. And surely it is needful to guard against dropping into a plaintive, doleful way of looking at things, exaggerating our troubles, and casting gloomy shadows over our own lives or those of others. We are made to suffer, it is true, but we are made for happiness too, and that suffering is only the road by which the happiness is to be attained. "Lord, I am not solicitous of the passage, so I may get to Thee," says Jeremy Taylor; but, nevertheless, we do all crave that the passage may be tolerable, and certainly no one is justified in making it gloomy and sad for themselves. All happiness (of a right kind) is an anticipation of the true life of gladness, and so to be welcomed and cherished. Only so often we shut our eyes to what is really close at hand, and miss the happiness which God offers us. As a rule, those who seek

least after their own happiness, and most for that of others, are the most successful in finding both.

It is a good prescription for happiness to take our life as God has shaped it, and not as our fancy or longing might desire. You might avoid so many troubles if you would. Be as retiring as possible; try not to be conspicuous; they are happiest about whom the world has least to say. Never be rough or caustic to others, and you will meet with fewer sharp words yourself. Bend your will to that of your neighbours, rather than seek to bend theirs. Avoid contradiction, and don't affect to know or guess what people wish to keep to themselves. Overlook or counteract the mistakes of others, and don't throw needless light on their follies and blunders. Consider the habits and likings of those around you, and never say, ever so confidentially,

that which it would be disagreeable to have said of yourself. And if a friend has caused your tears in the morning, smile upon him at night. Do you say that all these rules, if followed, would weary you, rather than make you happy? Nevertheless, be sure that if you thus concern yourself about the happiness of others, you will construct a very real happiness for yourself; there is far more to be obtained through others than through self. It is quite true that the imperfection of all earthly happiness helps to lift our thoughts heavenwards; nevertheless, it is altogether in conformity to God's Will that we should each try as far as may be to smooth one another's path, and produce as much happiness in the world as we possibly can. You will never regret or reproach yourself with having been the cause of too much of it on God's earth.

XV.

WHAT endless pages have been written about loneliness, and will yet be written! for it is one of those subjects which, sooner or later, must come very close to every human heart; and then one of the ways by which we instinctively seek to escape it, is by finding out what others have felt, and do feel, under its pressure. Perhaps nothing was ever said about loneliness which more suggested at once the religion, the philosophy, and the poetry of the subject than Pascal's celebrated "Je mourrai seul." We may cling tight to some loving hand, strong to guide, which will lead us to the brink of the dark river, but there we must let go,

and alone, utterly alone, as far as the natural world is concerned, pass into its stream. But the supernatural vision will surely then be made clear, and we shall see the host of "angel friends to bring us on our way," and the company of saints, and One Greater than all, Who passed through that lonesome hour Himself, with each one of us in His Heart, that He might take us safely through it when our time came.

Is it not true that faith strengthens many a soul to bear, or at least accept, the thought of that last moment of supreme earthly loneliness — death, while yet they shrink sorely from the loneliness of the present life?

Yet it must be an essential element in the process by which we are being fitted for our true life, since from the moment of birth it is inseparable from our every stage. From first to last, from lowest to highest, loneliness, with

respect to our fellow-beings, is stamped on all around. Even in the very highest act of fellowship we know—our very communions, which not only bring us into communion with our Lord and the invisible world, but with our brethren in the Faith throughout the world,—yet even there how entirely lonely we are; alone with God, eating the Body given "for *thee;*" drinking the Blood "shed for *thee;*" spoken to, dealt with, indwelt by Him as absolutely and entirely apart and alone as if neither man nor angel beside claimed His care or love.

Yes, in many senses our life must ever be one of isolation, nor need the solitary soul fancy that it is peculiar to himself. Amid the largest family it must be the same; all that is most important in the life of each of us must be carried on in solemn, reverent, hushed intercourse with God Alone: there is a sanctuary within every heart

where He alone can enter. The friend or brother who sets before us that aim which colours our life for good or ill, has to leave us alone when the final choice or decision is made, as he must do at our last hour. Face to face with God alone, if we did but remember it, we invariably refuse the evil and choose the good, or *vice versâ*. Impressed, stimulated, guided, of course we are by affection, by reverence, by fear, and a hundred varying influences acting on us by those around, but the act at last must be the result of our own lonely will. And with all our natural craving for sympathy and support, who that has ever borne much of sorrow or suffering, but knows the time when we instinctively withdraw from all, even the wisest and kindliest, and feel that to lie down with our face on the earth, with God's Hand upon us in strong yet loving pressure, is the only endur-

able refuge? "Their sorrow," Jeremy Taylor says, "was too big to be cured, till it should lie down alone, and rest with its own weariness."

"Wie denn auf dieser Welt keiner leicht den andern versteht!" Goethe exclaims; and the deeper the sorrow, the more vain it is to seek human soothing; as Homer of Antilochus—

> "Big with the mighty grief, he strove to say
> What sorrow dictates, but no word found way."

A religious, whose whole life had been spent in devout preparation for the end, when dying, and while accepting the devoted ministrations of the friend and Superior he loved best, on being asked, "Do you hear me?" touchingly answered, "*Un peu;*" as though to the ear on which Heaven's promises were so nearly bursting even the most precious earthly sounds could scarce penetrate: he was, to all intents

and purposes, alone with God. Surely he was proving the truth that "the stars grow brighter as the night darkens. As the lights of earth are put out one by one in the midnight of death, the countenance of Heaven makes plainer and plainer revelations." Those who are ever listening for the Voice of God, and expect to hear it everywhere, and in all seasons, are seldom disappointed: He may keep them waiting sometimes, to kindle the eagerness of longing, but He never forgets to speak. "I don't think the Lord will forget that I want Him," as a very poor, very lonely person said once to me. But, then, we must be listening; for although that Mighty Voice will one day wake the dead, and be heard throughout the worlds He has made, in His daily dealings with us it is still and small, meant to reach the loving, listening ear, meant to be waited and watched

for eagerly, as by those who feel through every hour of their lives that they are indeed "alone with God."

"Then what if I no love can own
To mark my going down,
If I may sit by sun of light,
Bidding the world good-night;
And while calm thoughts my soul engage,
Look from my evening hermitage
Upon the stormy wave,
Like the pale star of evening mild?
What if nor friend nor child
To watch my bed? less intervene
To hide that Friend unseen,
'Neath Whose enfolding wing at last,
The shadowy valley must be past,
In pity, strong to save.
So evil shall to me be good,
And my heart's solitude
Best company."

XVI.

WHY do people profess such unlimited admiration for what is old in certain things — buildings, paintings, manuscripts, statues, trees—and yet recoil from age in its best and happiest form, —the hoary head, which is "a crown of glory"? The charm of age in buildings, colours, trees, in most things, lies in the mellowing tints, the softened outlines, sometimes in the rugged masses which convey the feeling, not so much of strength as of service done, of battles fought, storms endured, rest nearly won. There is a great deal implied, inferred in our love for old things. And surely, where human old age is what it should be, it will com-

bine the attractiveness of mellowed and softened character, and of kindly, genial experience won in life's battle, no less than the oak tree or the sunset-glowing stones of a Roman aqueduct.

It is only the artificialness of our life, the real heathenism beneath our outward Christianity, which suffers us to look upon the earthly side of fading and decay, as though it were the end coming on, instead of the heavenly side, which, in each weed of mortality laid aside, brings nearer the true beginning. Age should be the most beautiful, the most winning, the most lovable thing in our sight; the

> "Calm old age,
> Waiting its summons to the sky,
> Content to live, but not afraid to die."

And so, thank God, it often is. Few of us but, either in present fact or precious memory, cherish some such wise, ripe, gentle, loving ones, who

have grown wiser and gentler, more charitable, more trustful, more hopeful, kindlier, more full of tender understanding for the day they have done with, more sympathetic; in every way more Christ-like, as the years have passed over them, and while taking away physical force and elasticity, and one kind of beauty, have brought an altogether different kind of loveliness, which has only got to ripen into the immortal, never-fading.

It is the world's false measure of what is good and desirable—the warped mind, owing to which

> "Age would to youth return,
> Farther from Heaven would be."

True,—time, trouble, pain, and toil bring the mere mortal frame into the material state of ruin;—but if these have been rightly used or borne, the ruin should be wreathed with lovely plants and rich in time-painted hues,

as the Coliseum itself is, or rather *was;* for modern "improvements," so called, have torn away the greeneries, the acanthus, the wild rose and ivy, and scraped the venerable stones, much as we too often find human ruins deprived of their grace and beauty by the smartening up of fashions and follies.

Doubtless it is a grace of God when He gives long life, since formerly it was spoken of as a reward for those who had kept His Law; and there can be no question that each year, and month, and day given is meant to fulfil its own particular work in fitting the old man or woman for their true life, and is, therefore, not merely to be slumbered through and got over anyhow. "'Deed, then, I'm living borrowed days," I remember an old tenant of my father's saying, who was nearing his fourscore; and he who feels them borrowed, will seek to render the trust

back with interest when the Master calls. And the strain, physical and moral, on the old, wisely and lovingly borne, will probably prove to have acquitted this debt?

There must be a strange reality in all things—that is, all things must be seen from a marvellously real point of view—when there is nothing left between the soul and eternity, nothing to be gained or lost, or sought or missed, save the grace for which we all pray continually, of "a holy and happy death."

"Old age would be mournful if it were not the gate of heaven," a Christian philosopher, nearly entering that gate, said. We cannot, then, afford to be looking back or down; our gaze must be fixed forward and upward.

Probably the heaviest trial of prolonged life is the inevitable loneliness it brings to many, the empty places

around, the closed doors never again to open for those loved ones to enter, the thoughts and memories and hopes none are left to share. As old Vaughan says—

> "They are all gone into a world of light,
> And I left lingering here."

No one, perhaps, to care for the little woes and pains which once were so tenderly felt for; no one to whom the old man (why have we English alone no single word which expresses it, as *il vecchio*, *le vieillard*, *der Alte ?*) feels that he is inexpressibly precious, as once he was. People are very kind, and he is surrounded, it may be, with gracious attention and thought, but he feels that all this is, so to say, from without; and there is pathos in what a Frenchman has said, that if in youth the body crushes the soul, in old age the soul pierces the body. But then

faith steps in, and says that a little more patience, a little more endurance of this frail body of humiliation, and all the lost treasures will be recovered. As Richard of Hampole wrote some six hundred years ago—

"Ther is lyfe withoute ony deth,
And ther is youth withoute ony elde,
And ther is all mannere welth to welde,
And ther is rest withoute ony travaille,
And ther is pees withoute ony strife,
And ther is all mannere lykynge of lyfe
And ther is bright somer ever to be,
And ther is nevere wynter in that cuntree,
And ther is more worshipe and honor
Than ever hadde kynge or emperour,
And ther is greter melodee of aungeles song,
And ther is preysing Him amonge,
And ther is all maner frendshipe that may be,
And ther is evere perfect love and cheritie,
And ther is wisdom withoute folye,
And ther is honeste withoute vilenage;
All these a man may joyes of Hevene call,
And yette the most sovrene joy of alle
Is the sight of Godde's bright Face,
In Whom resteth alle manere grace."

This is the old man's real solace as much as it was then, and it will be until that glad day when, if so it may be, we are given to behold that Perfect Vision, wherein is pleasure for evermore, and beholding, enter into His joy, to go out no more.

XVII.

MADAME SWETCHINE has made a touching remark, to the effect that whereas the thought of death is terrible to a barren, solitary mind, to which no tender affection or pity brings a softening grace, the same thought is sweet and gracious to the two antipodes of moral life—sorrow and supreme joy. To the first the thought of death brings change and a sense of deliverance; to the last, the consciousness that nothing more can be sought save God Himself, and that a true earthly love prepares the heart as nothing else can do for eternity; that death does not come to cut it short, which alone would make

life worth regretting, but to make it indelible. Time is the real foe of those who feel and love keenly; eternity is their permanent home, and the souls which have been knit together in this life by God's merciful tenderness, are ever conscious that it is only when Time and all that belongs to it have passed away for ever, that the real fulness and joyfulness of their mystic union will truly begin.

XVIII.

It is a truism, but yet one full of profound thought and poetry, which Jeremy Taylor embodies in the quaint phrase, "Every meal is a rescue from one death, and lays up for another; and while we think a thought we die; and the clock strikes, and reckons on our portion of eternity; we form our words with the breath of our nostrils, we have the less to live upon for every word we speak." Sleeplessness, which at some time or other is a trouble which besets every one, might be lightened, perhaps, by dwelling on such thoughts as the weary hours strike. The Watchman's Song, still kept up in

some old German towns and villages,* giving a spiritual meaning to each hour, is a great help in sorrowful, wakeful nights; and although we have not the cheerful, homely song beneath our windows to cheer us, there is nothing to prevent our comforting ourselves with the association of holy things with that striking clock, which the watchman used to provide,—the Twelve Apostles at midnight, the One God, the Three in One, the Seven Sacraments, and so forth. One of the saintliest laymen I ever knew habitually solaced his wakeful night hours with repeating the *Te Deum*, and I remember his saying that night after night it brought fresh meanings and consolations to his mind.

It may seem a trivial thing, but I

* I have heard this at Ober-Ammergau of late, and at Ulm, Nürnberg, and Ratisbon within the last twenty years.

have often noticed that wakefulness may be relieved by the help of an open shutter or blind, where people have the habit of closing everything into total darkness. There is something strangely soothing in the sight of even a little patch of the starlit sky, or of the grey light of morning as it creeps over the world. It may be that this relief comes from the same instinctive sense of infinity which makes an outlook, an opening to the sky, real or implied, so necessary to full enjoyment of every picture — a necessity expressed so forcibly by Mr. Ruskin, when he says that "without escape into the outer air and open heaven" there can be no satisfaction. Perhaps, too, that square yard of well-nigh darkness, or of moonlight clouds, or waving tree-tops, may serve to turn the weary, watchful mind from itself to dwell upon happier thoughts; upon Jacob's night beneath

the stars, when angels surrounded him, as they doubtless are now surrounding you, could you but see with the eye of sense as of faith; or, more helpful still, upon that watch amid the olives, when the Paschal moon arose "that saw thy Master's Agony."

There is no doubt but that wakefulness, like any other suffering, has a discipline to carry out upon us, and that he who takes it in this way, and tries to win submission and patience out of it, just as he would out of pain, will be able to say for himself, if not that "He giveth His beloved sleep," at least that in the weary night-watches faith and hope and keenness of spiritual vision have all been quickened, and that the "waking heart" has learnt to give itself up with ever-growing love and patience to Him Who is "about my bed" as well as "about my path," and Who sees and heeds the submissive

endurance of the weary as well as the sharper throes of the pain-distracted sufferer, and has the reward of patience's perfect work in store alike for both.

Save us, Lord, waking; defend us sleeping; that when we are awake we may watch with Thee, and when we sleep, we may rest in peace.

XIX.

MISFORTUNE—it is a word from which we all shrink, especially those who, loving the world and its good things, think more of fortune than of God. But the Christian, though as alive as any to what is painful and hard to bear, cannot suffer himself to think of anything as a *misfortune*, in the literal sense of the word, because he knows that, whatever it may appear outwardly, "all things work together for good" to the children of a loving Father; and he is convinced of the truth of the old sentence, that "when all things are desperate to man's sight, God's best opportunities begin." The world is not a place of unmixed pain, though

the pessimist would tell us that it is so. There are many pure and real joys to be found in it by loving and true hearts; there is more compensation than we are always willing to let ourselves perceive; and there is an unfailing fund of calm, restful gladness to those who have learnt to trust in Him Who they believe with their whole heart to be watching over and ruling every detail of their life. Nevertheless, this is not our rest, and the Master Himself has told us in the world we shall have tribulation. All that is of this world is necessarily incomplete; and were it otherwise, the fact that all is passing away, nothing abiding, would prevent us from finding perfect happiness. And while all that is glad and happy in earth carries with it the sobering consciousness that it cannot last, the very nature of pain, whether bodily or mental, is to make us feel as if it were

interminable; indeed, often the mere apprehension of suffering is as keen as the suffering itself, which may even be averted, while yet we may have gone through an agony of apprehension. S. Bernard says that those who have endured the depths of anguish here may well rejoice, forasmuch as they will not have to go down to the deep hereafter.

Surely, amid all suffering, great or small, it would help us more if we asked for grace to bear and use the pain from moment to moment, rather than cry out urgently for it to be taken away before its purpose be fulfilled?

S. Francis de Sales always objected to the way Christians talk of fortune—good and bad fortune—as essentially heathenish. "Depend upon it," he used to say, "sorrow is the real mother of holiness, and your boasted good fortune only a hard stepmother."

There is something significative in our technical use of the word, as implying money specially. A person has lost his fortune—meaning the possessions of this world exclusively. S. Francis was trying to comfort a lady who had lost her property, and who was murmuring at her hard lot. She refused to be comforted, and in reply to his question, "Is not God more to you than all these things? If you really loved Him in your wealth, will you cease to love Him in poverty?" she answered, "It is easy to say these things, but hard to practise them." "Truly," S. Francis replied, "that person must be very miserly to whom God does not suffice." The lady was so amazed at the thought that she who had lost all she possessed should be called a miser, that she turned aside in tears, which softened her heart to God's dealings.

There is a story told of a good priest, Féneberge by name, who died more than a hundred years ago, that, taking the Viaticum one night to a sick man to whom he was suddenly called, he had a fall, the result of which was so serious as to make it needful to amputate his leg. On being told of this, his first impulse was to pray earnestly that God would spare the limb; but the next was to say, "My body would fain keep its two legs, but my soul is content to accept God's Will;" and in after days he used to say, with a smile, "It is not with my arms or legs that I love God, but with my heart, and that I know will never be taken away; it is not worth moaning over anything which cannot hinder His love."

A great sufferer once playfully likened the sorrows of her life to a golden hailstorm. Who would not

endure that gladly, and make haste to pick up as many as possible of the stinging missiles?

There are many people who would think it wrong to complain of sickness or bereavement, who yet give way to a continual complaint about other things which are not less God's appointment —the disagreeables of weather, the vicissitudes of public events, the inconveniences of daily life. Yet each one of these details may have its purpose for our real good, as each hailstone melting on the land leaves its own special little drop of softening moisture behind.

XX.

"I KNOW nothing more saddening," one writes, "than to live always beside a sufferer to whom we can give no relief. But you must not lose courage under the trial. Rather do all you possibly can to raise the tone of faith in the mind of your poor incurable. Help him gently to win patience, and specially let him feel that you never weary of ministering to him. Nothing is more trying to permanent invalids than to feel themselves a burden to those around."

S. Francis de Sales, speaking of the special failings incident to the old, says that they want elasticity, because their moral nerves have shrunk like those of their bodily frame, and therefore they

need the tenderest handling. Your lot is to live with one whose mind is habitually contracted by pain; try to be thus indulgent towards him. You can scarcely speak, even indirectly, of death or preparation for it to him, for fear of rousing his jealous susceptibility that you are weary of him. Perhaps even this is not so unnatural as it seems now to you, and if the feeling exists, it must add heavily to his burden. But without lecturing him about death, you can find ways of helping him to sanctify his trial. Try to kindle in him thoughts of hope and trust which may counteract the perpetual preoccupation with self and its endurances; try in all ways to clear away what is discouraging and unhopeful. Don't preach to him, but where occasion offers bring into prominent relief the exceeding love of God, especially His tenderness to those whom He causes

to suffer. And do all you can to put away the impression that He sends these sufferings in judgment and punishment, but shew that rather they are the chastening of affection. It is much easier to prepare to meet a God of Love than a God of Justice only. Remember the mediæval story of the devil assuming the garb of a priest, and preaching a powerful sermon on the pains of hell—so powerful that every one went away trembling; and a holy man who knew who the preacher was, asked him how he could thus preach against his own kingdom? The answer is a lesson to us all. "I did nothing of the sort. I spoke, indeed, of the terrors of hell, but never one word of God's Love. Where there is no love there can be no power and no grace. I may have driven some to despair, but I know I have not set a single soul one step nearer Heaven."

The warmth of your own love will unconsciously communicate itself to his if it be true, and a few words of Holy Scripture or of a hymn, sparingly said in his presence, may be noticed and remembered when you think not. I have heard dying men repeating such things, which they had picked up, without knowing it, years before, perhaps from a child learning its lesson, or some equally casual way; and God's Holy Spirit, which had planted the little frail seed, caused it to spring up in the supreme hour of need.

XXI.

Your heart is very sore for "the things which have been, and shall never be again." Be still even in your pain. Sometimes, even in our holiest affections, God sees offshoots of self-love which He cuts away with an unsparing, though not an unloving, Hand. And though assuredly there can be nothing bitterer to the lip of pride than the fading and fall of presumptuous hopes, or the scorn of what we fondly believed to be duly tried friendship, it may be that even this cup of wormwood is to prove the tonic which will make your friendship one for hereafter as well as here. Perhaps in loving your friend you were too persistently seeking your

own gratification, rather than God's Glory or his good. You did not mean to be selfish, but you would have gone on unconsciously in the path of selfish love, and God has permitted the thunder-cloud to darken it. Or you made an idol of him and his affection. What he wished and liked and thought was prominent with you, and even in holy things a mist of earthliness rose with his image, veiling higher claims. "May God shatter all my idols!" was the heroic prayer of one who had learnt by experience how they hinder holiness; and though perhaps few of us could have courage to ask such dealing, He often does it without waiting to be asked, and by disappointment, estrangement, mere local separation, or it may be by death, cuts off the precious thing that was endangering our soul. It may be no more than that, surrounded with an all-sufficing earthly love, we

have forgotten to look beyond, and then the reminder comes, with stern but kindly sharpness, from Him Who will not surrender the first place in His creature's heart. He puts away what seemed all-sufficient, and in our desolation we stretch out our empty hands to Him with yearning infinite.

Do not be afraid: He is very tender over His weak children, and the idol which He has, as you now feel, ruthlessly shattered, He will restore to you in a perfected condition hereafter, if you bear submissively with the deprivation now, and strive to give Him the heart which you were lavishing on that idol. There is a place above for *broken* idols, surely, though not for idols which have held their position in our blind affection and worship, to the exclusion of Him Who requires our hearts all for His own.

XXII.

How little we think of our faults of grumbling and complaining! and yet surely they are faults. You would not like one of your family to be for ever murmuring at all your arrangements, finding fault with everything you do or plan, perpetually dissatisfied with all your efforts to keep things right? Yet this is what many of us do towards God. The weather, our own health, our friends' health, the daily events of life, are all grumbled at and complained of, as though we had a right distinctly to something better — as though a careless, thoughtless, unforeseeing Providence disposed everything.

Holy Scripture says that whoso

offends not with his tongue is a perfect man; and certainly very few of us seem to aim at perfection in this respect. Did you ever try to count how many grumbles and complaints you have made during the day, which are ungrateful to God, and utterly unavailing and profitless to yourself? Some people have resolved to try and begin by checking such remarks on one given subject, and have by degrees conquered the habit, greatly to their own and their neighbours' advantage. And really we often fall into an almost mechanical way of saying such things, just as we do with many other sins of the tongue.

The habit of letting every foolish or uncharitable thought as it rises find words, has a great deal to do with much evil in the world. Check the habit of uttering the words, and gradually you will find that you check the habit of thought too. A resolution

always to turn to some distinctly good thought when a complaining or unkind one rises in the mind, is a great help —as it is to turn every thought condemnatory of our neighbour into a prayer for him. We never can long continue to dislike people for whom we pray.

Invalids have great temptations in this way; their bodily condition often predisposes them to querulousness, and the lack of stir and occupation inclines them to dwell unreasonably on little annoyances and vexations, and to magnify, often wholly imagine, the slights, omissions, or vexations which seem such a trouble. "I have just had a moral tooth out," an invalid, who was not of this kind, writes. "It was a sharp pull to learn that I was not of half so much importance or interest to So-and-so as I in my vanity imagined myself to be; but I think I

am better already for not having a weak place for my mental neuralgia to settle in."

One thing we may be sure of, that if a trouble comes, specially antipathetic in all ways to our temperament and taste, it is sent because that particular point is the weak one where the Hand of the Divine Surgeon is needful; and this, one would fancy, might at once still the fretful resistance, and though it cannot take away the sense of pain or discomfort, make them comparatively easy to be borne.

Wherever we are by God's appointment we are sure to be "well." When S. Ignatius was asked by one of his followers what was the shortest and surest way of attaining the perfect life of Christ and its reward, he answered, "Many sorrows borne for His love." And he added, "If you ask this grace of God, all else will follow it."

But it is surely a mistake to be over-anxious to see precisely what God is doing — how each detail is to tell. "What I do thou knowest not now." We must be content to accept the dealing, certain that it has an object, but without inquisitively striving to dissect and analyze it. Long after we can often see the value of some privation or trouble, which pressed sorely at the time, and our cleared vision realizes that without it we had lost much; but it is not wise or dutiful so to strain after this knowledge while the trouble is present, as perhaps to miss the good it carries with it. It may be that the knowledge is not meant to come even at all in this life, and that we are to go on in darkness here. "If it be Thy Will," says Thomas à Kempis, "that I should be in darkness, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy Will I should be in light, be Thou again

blessed. So as Thou dost not cast me from Thee for ever, whatever tribulation may befall me shall not hurt me."

> "I wish to have no wishes left,
> But to leave all to Thee:
> And yet I wish that Thou shouldst will
> Things that I wish should be."

Which of us but is for ever saying the same, only in plain, sometimes *very* plain prose?

XXIII.

"I THINK one of the greatest evils to a chronic invalid," writes one of that class of sufferers, "is that we *talk* so much. Friends gather round, kindly intending to cheer us, and then they gossip, and we gossip, and I often fear it ends in something very unlike 'bridling the tongue,' and that one is 'deceiving one's own heart, and one's religion is vain.'"

There is a certain sermon of Bishop Butler's on this subject, which I have often longed to see in a form more generally attainable than in the full edition of his works, as only we have it now. It is on the government of the tongue, and the clear, incisive, often humorous sentences are inimitable.

Bridling the tongue, the Bishop says, has reference not to "evil-speaking from malice, nor lying and bearing false witness from indirect selfish designs. The disposition to these, and the actual vices themselves, all come under other subjects. . . . The thing here supposed and referred to is talkativeness: a disposition to be talking, abstracted from the consideration of what is to be said; with very little or no regard to, or thought of doing, either good or harm. And let not any imagine this to be a slight matter, and that it deserves not to have so great weight laid upon it, till he has considered what evil is implied in it, and the bad effects which follow from it. It is perhaps true that they who are addicted to this folly would choose to confine themselves to trifles and indifferent subjects, and so intend only to be guilty of being impertinent; but as

they cannot go on for ever talking of nothing, as common matters will not afford a sufficient fund for perpetual continued discourse, when subjects of this kind are exhausted, they will go on to defamation, scandal, divulging of secrets, their own secrets as well as those of others—anything rather than be silent. They are plainly hurried on in the heat of their talk to say quite different things from what they first intended, and which they afterwards wish unsaid; or improper things, which they had no other end in saying, but only to afford employment to their tongue. And if these people expect to be heard and regarded (for there are some content merely with talking), they will invent, to engage your attention; and when they have heard the least imperfect hint of an affair, they will out of their own head add the circumstances of time and place, and other

matters, to make out their story, and give the appearance of probability to it; not that they have any concern about being believed, otherwise than as a means of being heard. The thing is to engage your attention, to take you up wholly for the present time: what reflections will be made afterwards, is in truth the least of their thoughts. And further, when persons who indulge themselves in these liberties of the tongue are in any degree offended with another, as little disgusts and misunderstandings will be, they allow themselves to defame and revile such an one without any moderation or bounds; though the offence is so very slight that they themselves would not do, not perhaps wish, him an injury in any other way. And in this case the scandal and revilings are chiefly owing to talkativeness, and not bridling their tongue."

More than a hundred and fifty years have passed away since Bishop Butler wrote thus; but it is to be feared we need his warning words no less than the generation to whom they were addressed. The Bishop goes on to point out that deliberate sins of the tongue—intentional falsehood, slander, or injustice—are altogether of another class to those which arise from not "bridling" the unruly member.

"There is such a thing," he says, "as a disposition to be talking for its own sake; from which persons say anything, good or bad, of others, merely as a subject of discourse, according to the particular temper they themselves happen to be in, and to pass away the present time. There is likewise to be observed in persons such a strong and eager desire of engaging attention to what they say, that they will speak good or evil, truth or otherwise, merely

as one or the other seems to be most hearkened to; and this, though it is sometimes joined, is not the same with the desire of being thought important, and men of consequence. There is in some such a disposition to be talking, that an offence of the slightest kind, and such as would not raise any other resentment, yet raises, if I may so speak, the resentment of the tongue, puts it into a flame, into the most ungovernable motions."

After dwelling upon some of the "numberless evils and vexations in life" which are produced by this want of self-control,—sowing seeds of strife and ill-will, inflaming little disgusts and offences, and overthrowing that "equity of the utmost importance to society to be observed, namely, that praise and dispraise, a good or bad character, should always be bestowed according to desert,"—Bishop Butler

goes on to define the right use of speech, and when a man may be said, in a moral and religious sense, to bridle his tongue; in a very terse, forcible manner. He has a sly hit at the lawyers, while saying that business and affairs are not what he is treating of: "Though one may just mention that multitude, that endless number of words, with which business is perplexed; when a much fewer would, as it should seem, better serve the purpose; but this must be left to those who understand the matter;" and going on to those he has in hand, says with quaint satire, "The Wise Man observes that *there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence.* One meets with people in the world who seem never to have made the last of these observations. And yet these great talkers do not at all speak from their having anything to say, as every sen-

tence shows, but only from their inclination to be talking. Their conversation is merely an exercise of the tongue; no other human faculty has any share in it. It is strange these persons can help reflecting, that unless they have in truth a superior capacity, and are in an extraordinary manner furnished for conversation, if they are entertaining, it is at their own expense. Is it possible that it should never come into people's thoughts to suspect whether or no it be to their advantage to show so very much of themselves? *O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom* (Job xiii. 5). Remember, likewise, there are persons who love fewer words—an inoffensive sort of people, and who deserve some regard, though if too still and composed tempers for you. Of this number was the Son of Sirach, for he plainly speaks

from experience when he says, *As hills of sand are to the steps of the aged, so is one of many words to a quiet man.* But one would think it should be obvious to every one, that when they are in company with their superiors of any kind, in years, knowledge, and experience; when proper and useful subjects are discoursed of, which they cannot bear a part in; that these are times for silence, when they should learn to hear, and be attentive, at least in their turn. . . . And if we consider conversation as an entertainment, as somewhat to unbend the mind, as a diversion from the cares, the business, and the sorrows of life, it is of the very nature of it that the discourse be mutual."

Perhaps the invalid's privilege is considered to be dwelling on his own troubles and discomforts. And kind friends are too apt to indulge the

tendency, instead of drawing his attention into more interesting and helpful channels. But if we go on talking interminably of ourselves, we are certain both to say what had better be left unsaid on that topic, and to trench upon unlawful ground of our neighbours. And "the greatest evils in life," Bishop Butler says, "have had their rise from somewhat which was thought of too little importance to be attended to;" and so he affirms that if we "*will* be talking," whether designedly or not, we are sure to go on to evil. He sums up thus: "The occasions of silence, then, are obvious, and one would think should be easily distinguished by everybody; namely, when a man has nothing to say, or nothing but what is better unsaid—better either in regard to the particular persons he is present with, or from its being an interruption to conversation itself, or to

conversation of a more agreeable kind, or better, lastly, with regard to himself."

I remember an invalid who, fearing to see her room become the scene of parish gossip and chatter under the pretence of amusing her, had always a store of interesting things at hand—a clever leader, or review, or magazine; a laughable bit of *Punch*, or a fresh epigram, or, it might be, some private letter containing matter worth listening to; and the stream of unbridled talk was discreetly stayed by the introduction of some such thing. Of course, tact and perception are necessary for such diversion; but the invalid who complains of having little power to do good among those around, might cultivate such tact and perception quite as usefully, if not more so, than many and more obvious forms of ordinary usefulness. It is wonderful how such

almost unconscious lessons abide by us, and that is a happy house whence the visitor goes forth feeling that his intercourse has been hallowed and sanctified by the keeping of God's law of charity, and his lips and heart sealed to all unkindness and untruthfulness.

XXIV.

THERE are times when we seem to be simply crushed with the trouble laid on us; and, strangely enough, it is not always the *great* trial, the death-stroke, which takes the treasure of a clinging heart from us, the outward and visible blasting of all our hopes, the terrible accident which reduces us to a condition of blindness or crippledom, which produces this effect. No, in all such extreme moments an extreme power is generally given to endure, a more than ordinarily vivid sense of His exceeding nearness Who can make even the fiery furnace as a pleasant breeze; and most of those who have gone through the long discipline of suffering

will be agreed in saying, these are not the times that most sorely try the faith or love of the Christian training for immortality. But there are seasons when outward matters practically are much the same as when we could look at things brightly, and enjoy them, even; when no special sorrow or anxiety presses, hopes and fears and anticipations are all much as before; and yet there is a dense cloud of weary, clogging depression on our souls. Everything seems grey, chill, and disheartening; we find no spirit, no "savour" in anything. The cloudy day chills us, but the sunshine hardly gladdens us; solitude is full of carking, weary painfulness, yet we shrink from society, and are oppressed with the feeling that it is "nothing" to those who pass by, all unconscious of our suffering. Familiar places, books we have habitually delighted in, occupa-

tions we longed to have time to pursue, have lost all zest. We cannot write freely to the most sympathetic of correspondents for fear we should break out into fretful complaining, or lest they should entirely fail to understand our trouble. The interests, practical, artistic, literary, political, ecclesiastical, or even domestic, which were so keen a while since, are all pale and sickly. "*Cui bono?*" is the perpetual rejoinder of the weary spirit, and we shrink more and more within our shell, more and more utterly miserable. And this affection (for what else can we call it?) is what develops results too terrible to dwell upon in those who are not supported by the special helps of the Christian faith.

Now, there are several remedies to be taken promptly, even if the relief they give be slow. First of all, say to yourself that He Who was con-

strained to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" more than knows every iota of your trouble; knows it, sees it, watches it, and the precise chastening, healing discipline it is meant to work in your soul, pities and loves you the while; in short, "in all your affliction He is afflicted," and you were never less alone than in this dreary, heartsick, languid season of chilling desolation. Some day you will see it all plainly, and be able to trace exactly what those sickeningly trying hours had to do for you. Next try to take into your heart of hearts the assurance that no trial or temptation of this or any other sort can take you but such "as is common to men;" that multitudes have borne, and will bear, precisely the same thing, and that, so far from being utterly solitary in your trouble, the angels are well practised in ministering to just

the very pangs and voids and desolations which are so keenly proving you. Then think of your own dear ones, —husband, wife, parent, brother, or friend who has passed over the dark river to the rest (not passivity) of Paradise, and whose gladsome mission at this moment may be an unseen ministry to you; who may be watching without pain, though with intense sympathy, the process by which you are being led to their place of rest, and giving thanks on your behalf for what seems to you so intolerable.

And then, not striving to "wind yourself too high," come to a more secular, commonplace view of the matter. Probably mere physical facts have the largest share in it. Perhaps your weak, fluttering pulse may serve to tell this at once; most likely your necessary food is just as "savourless" to your material taste as other things

to the palate of your mind and soul. Then deal with yourself as you would with another, or, if you are quite incapable of this, call in the doctor. But, in nine cases out of ten, we can apply the needful remedy, the tonic, the more than ordinarily studied food, the extra moments of rest, or of relaxation to ourselves; and if this is done honestly and heartily, in order to "put the machine which has to work for God into good working condition," you will not be beset by any feeble scruples about self-indulgence or the like. If you have not energy to pursue your usual work —this is possible—take up something easier; if you cannot grapple with the books you ordinarily enjoy, don't be proud, try to get interested in a story-book. Be honest with yourself; be "pitiful and courteous," even to yourself. Remind yourself that such

troubled times have come before, and have passed away with renewed health and strength (for it is really on this that such troubles mainly depend). Take any little "hold-byes," as the old Covenanters called them, that happen to touch your fancy: "My time is in Thy Hand;" "When my spirit was in heaviness Thou knewest my path;" "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee;" "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord." The words may seem to you almost meaningless, to have lost the cheering reality they once had; but never mind, go on repeating them, striving to realize them, and even as the soft dew sinks imperceptibly into the ground, and makes the tender grass to spring up and grow, we know not how, so the Spirit of the Comforter will sink into your heart,

and in an hour when you think not, you will feel His ineffable grace and hope stealing over you. It may not be now, or speedily—leave that to Him Who cares for you as not even your fond mother knew how to care—but come it will. Only hold on with both hands to that certain hope, and let the Father's Love, the Son's Grace, and the Holy Spirit's Fellowship work in you till patience has her perfect work.

Then try some other little details of treatment which have helped your neighbours. Above all, never let yourself remain unoccupied; that is as fatal to your complaint as an east wind draught to bronchitis. Be doing, if you can only knit coverlids, or arrange your bookcases, or copy extracts, or weed the garden, or make lighters for the mantelpiece. And if you will give some sort of rule and discipline even to such trivial occupations, you will

find self-control and strength come out of it. Say to yourself, "I will do so and so till such an hour," and persist, though you are inclined to throw it up. It is almost superfluous to say, that the more your enforced occupations can be for anybody else's benefit, the more they will help you. Many a fit of nervous depression has been cured, or at least relieved, by going out to visit or work among the poor, who read unconscious lessons of patience and endurance past telling. Church services, even when they seem to have no spirit or zest, are a great help too.

Numbers of saints and holy persons have gone through lengthened periods of incapacity for the slightest enjoyment of their spiritual exercises, or of anything; indeed, we can scarcely take up the life of any such without being struck with the fact that light-hearted gladness and power of useful happiness

was seldom their continued portion. Most of the writings which serve to help and strengthen us for our earthly warfare have been the result of some such stern trial. "We have grown old insensibly," says Surin, "and have passed the vigour of our life in suffering. God makes us feel that He is so good a Master, that one could not complain of Him. He changes so blessedly evils into good, that the soul would not wish to be otherwise dealt with. He gives happiness in proportion to the miseries which any has suffered, and the slightest pain is so richly recompensed, that it is a lovingkindness to be miserable under His guidance." Surin was indeed "brought into the wilderness," and there, bared of all things without and within, "without pleasure in any created thing," God spake to his heart, and "after twenty years of suffering, his chief office seems to have been to tell others

of the blessedness of privation, and to exhort them to attach themselves to God alone."

It is seldom that we who are not saints are given so full a cup to drink, but whatever it be, one thing is certain, that every drop is measured out to us by Love, and that, when we have tasted meekly and trustfully thereof, and steadfastly accepted it all, we shall find that it is gracious, and that our sorrow is turned to joy, our pools filled with living water.

XXV.

When the utter destruction of all his hopes was announced to the Prophet Eli, his only answer (though the crushing grief was so great that the old man's life went out of him) was, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." Words which it is easy enough to take upon our lips, while the heart chafes beneath its pain. Keble has expressed this, with his usual beauty and force, in the "Lyra Apostolica," alluding to Job's outcry, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:"—

> "And dare I say, 'Welcome to me
> The pang that proves Thee near'?

O words too oft on bended knee
  Breathed to the Unerring Ear,
While the cold spirit silently
  Pines at the scourge severe.

"Nay, try once more—thine eyelids close
  For prayer intense and meek;
When the warm light gleams thro' and shows
  Him near Who helps the weak,
Unmurmuring then thy heart's repose
  In dust and ashes seek.

"But when the self-abhorring thrill
  Is past, as pass it must,
When tasks of life thy spirit fill,
  Risen from thy tears and dust,
Then be the self-renouncing will
  The seal of thy calm trust."

It might well be the subject of a profitable meditation to consider how often we bid Jesus "come into our house" without realizing what that invitation means; what the cost may be, what pangs the natural will and heart may be called on to bear, while receiving Him Who is as a refining fire. But we need not be afraid; He knows the

weakness of His erring flock; He knows full well how often spirit and flesh are at war within us; and it may be that those moments when, with clasped hands and strained pulses, we have surrendered all to Him, in the very teeth of an inward resistance which is at once all but overwhelming and abhorrent to us,—these may be "precious in His sight" as the death of self-will and evil influences in the heart He claims as His own. We must not presume to fix or imagine the reasonable limit to those trials which our Father sees good to lay upon us; any such meting out implies too much of mistrust and rebellion. There is but one safe course, and that is to accept day by day the portion of dry husks or bitter herbs allotted to us; day by day patiently to take up the cross, whether it be moral or material, sharp and piercing, or wearily aching, with the submissive utterance,

"All my days will I wait till my appointed change come,"—which all the same does not preclude the parallel cry, "Remember me, O Lord, for good. Have mercy upon me, and that soon." If acts of love and self-oblation are acceptable to God when all is well with us, and His sunshine gladdens our souls, still more are they so when they rise forth from the midst of weary, aching tribulation. It has been vouchsafed to saintly souls to see how those now nearest to the Eternal Throne are such as have borne most patiently the troubles of this life; and that not only the conspicuous troubles, seen and acknowledged of men, but the inner aches and siftings of loneliness, desolation, and mental struggles, of which the world knows nothing, which are rarely witnessed, probably, save by the unseen witnesses and guardians who are never far distant from our toilsome path, how-

ever lonesome and uncared for we may seem, in our poor earthly weakness and blindness, to ourselves.

Whom He loves, He visits with trial; and they who win grace to see love in every trouble will grow daily in love for Him, and for their fellow-men, even when this latter love seems to bring much of trial and heartache with it. We have heard worldly people say that a loving, tender heart is sure to bring suffering and misery to its possessor, and that it is better to be able to wrap one's self round in a cloak of selfish indifference; but this is a cruelly false reasoning. That quick affections and earthly clingings bring pain, none will deny; but out of them, through them, the soul rises more and more purely to the One Lover of souls; and "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?"

No saint in Paradise but has been nailed to the Cross of Christ, and they who have loved most have suffered most—outwardly in the body, inwardly in the soul. The world, the devil, the flesh, have all torn them, and God Himself has purged their hearts with endless desolations, dryness, and helpless weariness, miserably unaccountable, were it not that He will have them bring forth more and better fruit. And because they waited in patience and trust through all, He has now poured out the full measure of His consolations upon them.

One of the most helpful points in reading the lives of saints is that we are so forcibly reminded how they went through the same troubles and trials, in one shape or another, that we are going through now; and though we, the Church militant, call them saints, during their earthly pilgrimage they

were but struggling men and women as we are. The toils and aches which are pressing upon us at this moment are what moulded them; they, perhaps, only held on from day to day as we do, asking and receiving grace for each day's struggle, little supposing how each act and word of love and submission was a fresh gem in the crown awaiting them, or that

> "The rod they take so calm
> Should prove in heaven a martyr's palm."

Let us go on, then, a little while—a very little while, it may be; for, as one says (now himself gone thither), "How uplifting, how calming, how hallowing the thought, that before the rising of another sun, we may be in the country of the faithful departed, if found worthy to be there!" We often put up, scarcely caring, with the discomforts of a journey, an inn, or any other temporary annoy-

ance, because we are looking to the sure rest and ease of home, or of a friend's welcome; and it is surely a help to make this life's uneasinesses sit lightly on us, that Home, and the welcome of our Father, our Lord, our Comforter, and that of all saints and all the dear ones gone before, awaits us, and may be greeting us,—it cannot be very long off; it *may* be even to-day.

The following verses, nearly touching this subject, were repeated to me one day. I know not whose they are, but the writer has assuredly realized such thought as the above:—

"One calmly soothing thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er,
That I'm nearer Home each day
Than ever I was before;

"Nearer my Father's Home,
Where many mansions be;
Nearer the great White Throne,
Nearer the jasper Sea;

"Nearer the bound of life,
Where all lay burdens down;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer finding the crown.

"But lying as a shadow between,
Quietly through the night,
Is a deep and unknown stream
Which leads without fail to light.

"Father! my hope fulfil,
Strengthen my clinging faith;
Let me feel as I would when I stand
Beside the river of death;—

"Feel as I would when I stand
My feet on the very brink;
For I may be nearer Home,
Nearer *now* than I think."

XXVI.

PROBABLY all who have keen feelings and perceptions, and the power of throwing themselves eagerly into the various strains of thought and emotion amid which our souls lie, are more or less subject to the over-tension or slackening of mental chords which we call depression. Some conceal and suppress these painful vicissitudes more than others, but there they are nevertheless. If there is more heroism in concealment, there is perhaps more charity in the revelation, since it is an undoubted solace to most human beings to know that others have experienced their troubles, especially when those others are good and holy men, whose trials all would admit at

once to be God's living dealings, not anything less helpful.

Dr. Hook was one pre-eminently of these; his seasons of depression were frequent and trying. In one such he writes: "As the natural man goes downhill, and the moral man learns to take higher and higher flights towards those heavenly regions where he hopes to live for ever with his Saviour, and those who were worthy of his love on earth; so do we feel more deeply, more intensely, the beauties of inanimate nature,—that nature to which Wordsworth has, more than any other poet, given a voice."

Wordsworth himself knew to a nicety how sensitive spirits quiver and vibrate. It might be well if we oftener remembered his refusal—

> "Too curiously to ask
> How much is but the blind result
> Of cordial spirits and vital temperament."

Half our daily troubles are caused by the body's imperfections or failure; and if we remember S. Francis de Sales' words, "It is God tearing up the cover," we shall perhaps be more patient. "One half of all God's gifts is pain," it has been said. A venerable religious, suffering from incurable malady, wrote over the door of his room, "Here God's Will is being done;" and when questioned, he answered, with a smile, "It seems that my sick-bed is God's Will for me, and in it His Will and mine are fused."

You think you could willingly bear a sharp temporary agony, but you recoil from incurable illness? How many hearts have fought out that battle before you! Nothing but continual acts of renewed resignation will save you from impatience and rebellion. Suffering day after day

alike, with nothing to hope for in the future, I have known too many who, almost in spite of themselves, have given way to hopeless discouragement, and have cried out for death to set them free; but this is mere moral prostration, and not the "love of Christ constraining" them. Pray rather for patience to bear on for precisely the duration your loving Lord appoints. He will not give you one hour more than is needful to bring you to the everlasting Home prepared for you. A royal sufferer of former days, when asked how she was, used to reply, "Very well, for I am fulfilling my Father's Will." You need neither vision nor revelation to tell you that you must suffer so long as your life lasts; but do not give way to discouragement. Remember Fénelon's words, and "thank God for having given you the gift and power of dying

daily." You would gird yourself to a great vocation; realize that He has called you to a vocation of daily suffering, which does not look great, and take it in the same spirit.

The thorn-crowned Head must needs have pain-stricken members. If you *saw* Him laying a visible pain upon you, you think you would bow in almost joyful acquiescence. You do not see with your earthly vision, but you know as surely as though you saw, that it is His Hand Which lays your present suffering on you—that "Dear Hand, once pierced for you."

XXVII.

"EVERY one of us must know, in varying degrees," says Dr. Liddon,* "that what we call temperament is to a great extent under the control of our wills. True indeed it is that for all of us, at times, 'the corruptible body presseth down the soul.' When we set out in life each of us is endowed by our Creator with certain moral predispositions, of which His unerring Justice will surely take account when He comes to deal with each separate life as a moral whole, whose day of growth and probation has at last been closed. . . . We may have a constitutional tendency to

* University Sermons, xvii. Second Series.

depression, but we can give way to it until it sways us irresistibly, or we can check, thwart, and altogether overcome it by cultivating an opposite habit of mind. The moods of our souls are not really like our hair, or the leaves of a plant,—things which grow up and present themselves without our having anything to say to them. We can give them free course by indulgence; we can train or we can quell them by self-discipline. Be sure that He Who made each one of us does not ask at our hands that which He has Himself made it impossible that we should give Him. For He has not left us to ourselves: He is ready to help us to learn the secret of peace and joy in the soul; and His gifts of supernatural grace do their work, whatever be the physical temperament with which He may have endowed us at the outset of our journey."

And again: "But the rule is that trouble does crush man, unless man can lay hold on One Who altogether transcends human life and its vicissitudes. Trouble is indeed His messenger; it is an invitation to make friends with Him; it robs life of its radiance and its vigour, while stripping it of its tinsel and unreality; it leaves man face to face with the weakness, the nothingness, of the unassisted soul. . . . More depressing still is spiritual trouble, such as some of the best Christians have known, when God's Face is hidden from the soul; when there seems to be no light in the understanding, no warmth in the heart, no vigour in the will; when the habit of prayer is maintained as a mechanical effort; when religious language is used, but as a talisman which has lost its force; when everything

seems hollow, unreal, cold, and dead. 'Thou didst turn Thy Face from me, and I was troubled.' It may be penal, this overclouding of the heavens; it may be that the service of God in bygone times has been tainted by a subtle, penetrating selfishness, and that prayer and duty have been valued more for the pleasure they yielded to the servant than for the sake of that Lord Who is their rightful object. To teach men to serve Him for His own sake, He may well make His service for a while dreary and unattractive: the exile beyond the Jordan may be surer of his motives than the Levite rejoicing in the temple courts. But such a visitation may also have a very different meaning. We remember Who it was that, as He hung dying upon the Cross, made those ancient words His own: 'My God, My God, why

hast Thou forsaken Me?' The temptations of a time of trouble are obvious. Many a man will say to himself that his religion was but a passing phase of feeling, and that it has worn itself out; that the illusion has had its day, and that he now sees through it in the light of experience. And yet what is this but to mistake an act of Divine discipline for a collapse of truth? 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? O put thy trust in God.' Cling to His Hand, though He lead thee through the darkness. Say with an old servant of His, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Give up nothing that has bound thee to Him, or that has done Him service in former years, though for the time it be reft of comfort, or even of meaning. Who would cut off the limbs of a man because they are numbed by the frost?

Depend on it, in His good time He will not fail thee; the longest night is followed by the dawn; He 'will bring thee forth to the light, and thine eyes shall behold His Righteousness.'"

This time of aching weariness may be that "reverent pause," which, like the crushing of the winepress, is "a growing less unfit for Heaven." *

Carlyle, in one of his Reminiscences, speaking of his own troubles, calls them "wholly blessed in retrospect, and infinitely worth suffering;" and this is just the point where we might perhaps gain so much, could we even, while bearing the cross, keep more

* "We all aspire to Heaven—and there is Heaven
Above us. Go, then! Dare we go? No, surely!
How dare we go without a reverent pause,
A growing less unfit for Heaven?"

R. BROWNING.

steadfastly in mind that it is "infinitely worth suffering." This it is,

> "In sad mood,
> Or buoyant, that sweet secret aye to know
> Of cheerfulness,"

"bearing right onward through varying feelings."

XXVIII.

"In the world of the soul there are sometimes shadows, when there are no clouds. It continues clear and blue overhead, but the brightness has passed away. . . . These temptations are very apt to take the form of weariness." Most people trying to live earnest lives know the truth of this; and how we become, as Faber graphically says, "like men trying to read small print by strong moonlight. There is light enough, but not the right kind of light."

Summing up the leading features of this peculiar and very searching trial, he says, "Nevertheless let us take this

comfort: Is not our state in its results the same with an interior trial through which Job was made to pass?

"'Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me" (and oh, what a pathetic human wail!), "*when my children were about me. . . .* And now my soul is poured out within me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.'"

And then the commentator (who knew by experience what he was speaking about) says, in words which will come home to many a heart, "*The trial of a faded soul!* It is hard to bear. But Job bore it, came safely to his end, and lies now in the Bosom of

his Heavenly Father. It will be so with us. Doubt not."

Who but one who had borne the trial could write such helpful words as these: "We must not forget that many of the phenomena of the spiritual life spring from natural causes. Our body can go wrong short of illness, short of ailment. It is a very delicate and capricious instrument. The reaction after hard work, different seasons of the year, individual constitution, very slight atmospherical disturbances,—all of them tend to bring forth many moral results, without the intervention of actual pain or positive malady. . . . But the important thing to be considered is, that our physical difficulties have to be sanctified just as much as our spiritual difficulties. . . . Mental unwellness, sorrow, vexation, misfortune, uncertainty, the sense of injustice, wounded feelings, are the sources of

many things which go wrong in the spiritual life. . . . But while they account for them, they do not excuse them. For these bodily and mental necessities and infirmities are just what we have to defend ourselves against, and bring into subjection to grace. At the same time, we shall be more simple, childlike, genuine, and straightforward, when we attribute the discomforting phenomena without surprise to these natural causes, than when we fancy all manner of things. . . . Now, it is plain that weariness is just the kind of misery which bodily disturbance or mental anxiety would be likely to produce. For both body and mind chafe the soul, and chafing makes it fretful, and fretfulness is near of kin to weariness."

Among the various causes which bring on this weariness, Dr. Faber lays great stress on self-will, as having a peculiar power to induce it. "I do

not mean," he says, "self-will in religious things only, but a course of self-will even in things indifferent. There is something especially corrupting in the following of our own wills, however trifling the things in which we follow them may be. This is why S. Paul tells us to do everything for the glory of God." And he dwells upon a form of weariness, for which another name is depression or low spirits, which "God sends, not so much as a punishment for sin, as one of the processes by which our soul is to be cleansed, and fitted for higher things. Such divine visitations are perhaps more common than we suppose. . . . There is no necessity that we should know when our weariness is directly from God; indeed, it is generally an essential part of the trial that we should not know it. It is not necessary to know it, because the knowledge would not alter our

manner of dealing with it. It would only be a comfort." But then come the needful cautions, lest our weariness, our depression, lead us into mischief. This it will do if it in any way cause us to "come down the mountain a little, and put ourselves on a lower level;" or if it cause us to do our spiritual duties languidly—"if we "tire of Him, never to be tired of Whom is in itself our everlasting bliss," and begin to seek consolation in that which is not Him nor of Him.

There are a few counsels given for dealing with this weariness which may help us all. Foremost this, "not to fret and toss under it, like a man who cannot sleep," but still not to be passive; to be quiet, and not precipitate; steady, and not intermittent. "We must deal firmly with ourselves, but it must be a very gentle firmness. We must consider our weariness either as a punish-

ment to be endured reverently, or as a suffering to be borne in union with the Passion of our Blessed Lord." And Dr. Faber's concluding words may at least comfort the weary ones: "But it is a great trial, and I wish I could console you more efficaciously under it. It is a very real suffering. Nevertheless, we must either push on, or give up the strife. As to this last, I do not say, Who will dare to do it? but rather, Whose love of God will let him do it? It is cruel to drag a man up and down a room after he has been overdosed with laudanum, while he is moaning with weariness, and intreating to be allowed to lie down and sleep. Yet it is one of those cruelties which are part of the imperiousness of mercy. So we must let ourselves be shaken, and forced onwards, and pricked with needles, if need be, and beaten as though we were flagging beasts of

burden. I take it for granted that we are clear about our not doing as much for God as we very well might do. Let us hold on, tired as we are. . . . Life is short. The thing is to be ready to die, and to be free from reproach at that dread hour; and is there one of us who would quite like to die, doing as little for God as we are doing now?"

XXIX.

THE following letter, written to a person for whom it was a question of a serious operation, may be valuable to others placed in a similar position:—

"Do not say you would far rather die than submit to this operation. To speak thus is to assume that you are the owner of your life, and have a right over it, which God only, Who gave it, and will take it back in His own time, possesses. Somewhere there is a hymn—its strains, though perhaps half doggerel, ring in my memory—which says—

'Father, I would not dare to choose
A longer life, an earlier death;
I know not what my soul might lose
By shortened or protracted breath.'

That is just it. You cannot tell why, in His love and mercy, our Lord may see good to prolong a life which you imagine to have become useless and simply burdensome. There are some to whom your prolonged life is valuable, whatever you may think; and though I would not have you restlessly and anxiously seek means for lengthening out a life which our Father might be calling in, that is quite different from deliberately turning away and refusing to listen to the suggestions He puts before you, through the appointed channels of wise and scientific physicians. It seems to me a duty quietly, patiently, and trustfully to make use of such means as are thus put before one, leaving the issue most absolutely to God, and asking but one thing, namely, that whatever is His Will may be fulfilled, and accepted by all concerned. Then, whatever that issue, you know it

will be the right thing; and those whose affection for you in this world has a claim, will be satisfied that it was through no wilfulness or neglect of proffered means, should it still be His Will to take you from them. If you want the encouragement of example, there have been many saintly religious who, still more than you, might plead that they had no family to whom they owed all rightful efforts to prolong life, and to whom the going home to be with Christ was, as far as we can see, the most unmistakable gain; and yet who submitted unhesitatingly to operations which their medical advisers recommended, as accepting God's Will to purify and sanctify them by this special trial. Let yourself be crucified with Christ; accept every detail of pain or humiliation involved, in humble union with His Passion. If chloroform is judged necessary, dwell

on the vinegar and hyssop offered to Him; bear every trying necessity, to the very shrinking from the cup given you, as making you more like to Him, and whatever may be the result, there will be no loss to you. You will become, in your measure, a confessor for Christ, showing forth that in His Name you can bear all things. If the operation is decided on, you will, of course, receive the Holy Communion as immediately before it as may be possible, and then strength will come. Under some such condition S. Francis de Sales bids the sufferer to look upon himself as pierced by one of the nails of the Cross. And as to your being 'useless,' what matters it how or where you serve God, so long as you do serve Him? and surely you cannot serve Him more entirely than by patiently accepting His ordering of your life. If He wished you to be actively stirring about in His

service, He would not send you a malady which prostrates you; and when He appoints inaction, it must be, for you, preferable to the more grateful activity you find it so hard to give up.

"Great trials are for the most part accompanied by special graces; and I do not find that the saints have ever counted exemption from suffering, or a speedy deliverance from pain and anxiety, as a special grace. Whatever, then, may be appointed you, give yourself up to it with quiet trust, and try to make S. Francis' rule, of 'asking nothing, refusing nothing,' your own. In a little while the clouds will have cleared away, and 'in the full sunshine of His smile' all will seem to you, as it is—WELL."

XXX.

It is not only S. Paul, suddenly overwhelmed on his memorable journey to Damascus, from whom the question must arise, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" For each one of us, whether on a bed of pain, in feebleness and uncertainty of purpose such as comes with ill health or overstrained nerves, or whatever else may be our immediate condition, nothing is more urgent, nothing more behoves us than to ask, "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" For whatever our state, however helpless and incapable, however little service to God or to our neighbour seems within our power, there is no doubt at all as to His

willing us to do *something*. Not necessarily any great thing; it may be only some little message of sympathy and comfort to carry to one even more lonely than we are; it may be some tiny pleasure to a little child, or a kindly word or glance to some whose own fault has cut them off from general kindness and pity; it may be even only in humble patience to stand and wait till He makes His Will plain, abstaining the while from murmur and fretfulness; but, in some shape or other, be certain that your Master and Lord hears and will answer your question, "What wouldst Thou have me to do?"

Did you ever, when in pain or weakness, dwell upon that exquisitely tender message sent from Bethany to the Great Sympathizer, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick"? Not all His love for Lazarus was to keep off the

trial of sickness and death; rather, perhaps, that very love was the reason why they were sent, for all those whom He calls "friends" are to be tried, till they "come forth as gold." Pause a few minutes in thought upon that message. Have you not sometimes sent some such to one on whom you leant, in whose affection you trusted, so that when once he did but know you were in trouble, you were certain he would forthwith come to you? Perhaps now the very keenest edge of your suffering is that it is so no longer; that, from one cause or another, the earthly help on which you so entirely counted is not available, and the very thought of what once was, and cannot now be your comfort, adds untold anguish to your loneliness and craving for a sympathy which seems denied. Your thoughts are mirrored in the touching lines—

"There was one whom I made my stay,
  But Thou didst set him far away,
That I might courage take on Thee to lean;
  And lest I hang on earthly love,
  Thou didst with sorrow me reprove,
And badest me to fix my love on Thee unseen."

But send your message still; do not hesitate—be not afraid; it will be dutifully carried, patiently received, and the understood summons so promptly, so lovingly complied with. The angels—your own guardian angel—will be the willing messengers, and will, almost before you have breathed the cry, carry it to the Friend, the Priest, the Lover of your soul: "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick:"—sick at heart, weary, languid, not knowing what he wants; only able to stretch out a trembling, nerveless hand for help; afraid of danger, spiritual or material; afraid of the indifference or misapprehension of his fellow-men; afraid perhaps, most of all, of himself and his own wayward

longings for ease and gladness of this world, even while he strives to leave all to Thee; longing to touch but the hem of Thy Garment, out of which the virtue of peace and trust and hope, and all things lovely and gladsome, will come. And be sure—you may not hear it; the loud throbbing of your earthly heart may drown the still sweet voice; your eager desires may need yet a gracious purifying to admit of higher, more complete fulfilment;—but that Divine Voice has already uttered, "Be not afraid. It is I. I will come and heal him." And He is the very Truth, Who can never fail nor forsake His people.

Have you not sometimes watched a sick person when, in delirium, he kept on calling for some one dearly loved, who, all the while present, holding the feverish hand, speaking words of soothing, yet could not bring the

patient to consciousness of his presence, until the fever stayed, and the feeble eyes, as reason returned, rested with glad certainty on the face beloved? Somewhat thus it is with us when, in our fevered suffering, we fail to realize that our Dear Lord *has* answered our call, *is* standing beside us, *is* bearing our grief, afflicted in our affliction; and in the same way, when the delusions of earthly things, the self-willed craving for ease after our own fashion, or whatever that tormenting, wilful other "I" harasses us with, is laid aside and stilled, our eyes will be clearer, and we shall see Him, and rest in His Love.

What an illumination it will be some day to the soul, which has loved and struggled, and fallen short, and tried anew, and loved on, on, through all its shortcomings and falls, to know how He guided and led, and pitied

and supported, and comforted His frail creatures all through; how, when the soul thought itself most lonely, most deserted, He was there!

"Consider, my son, the fruit of these labours, the end near at hand, and the reward exceeding great, and thou wilt not grudge to bear them; rather thou wilt have the strongest comfort of thy patience. For instead of that little of thy will which now thou forsakest, thou shalt always have thy will in heaven.

"Yes, then thou shalt find all that thou mayest wish, all that thou shalt be able to desire.

"Then thou shalt have within thy reach all good, without fear of losing it.

"Then shall thy will be ever one with Me; it shall not covet any outward or private thing.

"Then none shall withstand thee, no man shall complain of thee, no man

hinder thee, nothing come in thy way; but all things thou canst desire shall be then altogether present, and refresh thy whole affection, and fill it up to the brim. . . .

"Then shall the fruit of obedience appear, the labour of repentance shall rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned. . . .

"This is what thou art to wish, that whether it be by life or by death, God may be always glorified in thee."

"'Ye,' saith He, 'at once would quit you
Of the struggle and the pain;
Ye at once change pain and sorrow
For the Life that shall remain;
But—My will is that ye shall tarry,
Tarry till I come again.

"'Follow Me meanwhile.' And answer:
(Spite of battle and distress)
'Whatsoever snares beset us,
Whatsoever toils oppress,
When Thou puttest forth Thine own sheep,
If Thou go before them—YES.'"

XXXI.

LACORDAIRE, one of the most active, enthusiastic of men, gifted with such marvellous powers of attracting and sympathizing with others, had a most intense love himself for solitude, of which he sometimes speaks as "my element, my life." And, as probably must always be the case with any mind of wide grasp, and deep insight into thing temporal and spiritual, the great Dominican's solitude was often a time of profound melancholy; of home-sickness, at once painful and delicious, for the one true Home to which all his thoughts tended. "Weak and grovelling souls," he writes to a friend, "find sufficient aliment for their intelligence,

and can satiate their love in things of earth. They do not perceive the emptiness of things visible, because they are incapable of penetrating further. But the soul which God, when creating it, has brought into nearer contact with that which is infinite, begins speedily to realize the narrow limits which restrain it. Such a soul is subject to unknown sadnesses, concerning the source of which it is often deceived; imagining too readily that certain combinations of ordinary circumstances are troubling its life, whereas verily the trouble springs from a higher source. It is remarkable, in the lives of saints, that almost all have experienced this melancholy, of which the ancients were wont to say that no true genius ever was without it. Of a truth, melancholy is inevitable in any far-seeing mind, in any deep-thinking heart. Not that I mean to say one

ought to foster and indulge it, for it is a malady which enervates, if we do not rouse it; and it knows but two remedies —death, or God."

Happy they who always have grace and courage to seek that Divine remedy, which can so raise and purify even earthly sadness as to give it eagles' wings to lift the drooping soul above this world's clouds, and so ever, through what seems at first sight most depressing, to win that which is loftiest and brightest.

XXXII.

WHETHER your sufferings be mental or bodily, you will find a powerful remedy for them in the Blessed Sacrifice of the Altar. "Our Lord" (says a Bishop) "has been pleased to establish the closest links between the Eucharist and all suffering. They combine to work for good in our souls. Suffering often helps us to make good communions, and surely nothing more helps to sanctify suffering than a good communion."

Very often we are conscious of an immediate, indescribable relief, especially where the suffering is mental, from the moment of receiving our most

Blessed Lord. And if so, how fervent, how deep must our thanksgiving be! But it would be dangerous to count on this as a tangible certainty, or to be discouraged and lose faith because such is not our conscious experience. It may be that present relief from the pressure which is so heavy would not be our real gain; and therefore, while He helps us to bear it, and soothes the harassed nerves which seem worn almost past endurance, He does not then and there take it off, and fill us with the rush of ease and gladness we crave. "A little longer, My child," the mild Voice whispers; and be it ours to answer—

"Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
Yes, without stay of father or of son,
Lone on the land and homeless on the water,
Pass I in patience till the work be done.

"Yet not in solitude if Christ anear me
Waketh Him workers for the great employ;

Oh, not in solitude, if souls that hear me
Catch from my joyaunce the surprise of joy.

"Never a sigh of passion or of pity,
Never a wail for weakness or for wrong,
Has not its archive in the angels' city,
Finds not its echo in the endless song.

"Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,
Neither forgetful that we are but dust;
Not as from heavens too high for our upreaching,
Coldly sublime, intolerably just.

"Nay, but Thou knowest us, Lord Christ, Thou knowest,
Well Thou rememberest our feeble frame;
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest
Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame."

"There were once three walking in the fire," says the Warden of Clewer, "when suddenly there appeared a Fourth, and the form of the Fourth was like the Son of God. So it is after every communion. At the dawning of the day I was by myself—

alone. A little while, and I have knelt at the altar, and lo! another has entered within me, and His form is the very Living God, and we move together through the fires. The power of His Presence was on the three faithful ones; for not even the smell of fire had passed on them, neither were their clothes burnt. So may I walk with my Lord through the flames of the day's trials. They shall not touch me, neither shall the hair of my head be singed. Temptation cannot, as before, affect me; nor the evil that is around me move me as of old. Whenever the soul is kept in this recollected state, all that acts upon it acts for good. Every accident becomes a Providence, every voice speaks of God, every passing change is as the breath of air stirring the chords of the lyre, drawing out holy desires, awakening saintly aspirations. The vision of another world is

ever breaking through the expressive aspect of natural things; and we are secretly moved to the unceasing exercise of grace, because life within and around has become the utterance of God, ever felt to be reigning within us. And as these acts of recollection become an habitual practice, the inner being is more and more influenced by it. . . . This most precious inner communion is the compensation for every loss in this world, and its sweetness more than counterbalances whatever the soul has surrendered for Christ. It is life given back for the life that has been left, and 'life more abundantly.' It is the assurance of the inward truth of a life that cannot die, to the soul content to withdraw itself from that which is daily perishing. It is the making sure, as far as is possible at this distance from His seat of glory in Heaven, of His everlasting companion-

ship. . . . It is Heaven begun, though veiled, secretly hiding itself till the inward sight is purged, and the will made one with God." *

"Nothing more precious than this in My Sight,
If with thyself and thine own will thou fight;
Bearing all anguish, renouncing all bliss,
And as a sacrifice, offering this.

"Grant Thou this patience, O Jesu, to me!
Grant Thou Thy graces, my safeguard to be!
So that in all things Thy Will may be mine,
Bearing all troubles, because they are Thine."

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* "Spiritual Instructions in the Holy Eucharist," p. 43.

XXXIII.

THESE are not days in which people generally take things too calmly; eagerness, impulse, excitement, enthusiasm, are, so to say, in the air—and about worldly things, at all events, we are most of us eager enough. But are we always as eager in the things unseen? How every one of us in our turn has struggled, and striven, and toiled, for some aim—it may be most excellent and conscientious—which we thoroughly and with our whole heart wanted to accomplish! It may be well, in a season of thoughtfulness induced by illness, sorrow, or solitude, to investigate seriously whether we have ever struggled and striven, wrestled and pleaded, with like energy

and enthusiasm, for anything pertaining wholly to the unseen. Life goes so rapidly, and we are so familiar—thank God for it in most ways—with Holy Scripture and its marvellous teaching, that probably we have heard or read many hundred times, without pausing in the endeavour faintly to realize them, those solemn words, which tell us how our Divine Lord and Saviour, "BEING IN AN AGONY, PRAYED THE MORE EARNESTLY." He—God Incarnate—in an agony.

Oh, fearful, shrinking human soul, to whom such very human, personal trouble seems an "agony," think for a moment on thy knees what the agony of Jesus means! The very impossibility of fathoming so deep, so overwhelming a mystery, is a lesson for us to learn. But however incapable we may be of grasping it, at least we can follow the example, and "pray more earnestly."

The servant is not greater than his

Lord; and the weary, sorrowful heart may find comfort in dwelling upon S. Paul, as "having no rest in his spirit" because he did not find Titus (2 Cor. ii. 13). But we shall do well to mark, that with S. Paul as with his Master, the anguish was not selfish; it was for others that both strove and agonized. And it is no bad test of the real nature and quality of our own uneasiness, unrest, or agony, whether it is purely personal and selfish:—whether I myself, my own pain or discomfort or loss, be the motive, or whether it be the true solicitude of charity, seeking not her own but others' good, which is the cause of anxiety and distress.

It has been said that few people are the better for infirmity and weakness. But if so, is it not a virtual acknowledgment that those who are no gainers by their Father's dealings with them, have in some wise not received

those dealings rightly, have not sufficiently given themselves up into His Hands to do with them as He sees fit? Perhaps self-love, which has such a marvellous faculty of creeping in everywhere, has stolen in and blinded the sufferer to everything except his own discomfort; and thus concentrating his thoughts and energies upon himself, it has closed his eyes to the supernatural side of his trial season. A very little reflection will satisfy any one that if God, in His wise purpose, lays us aside, and puts a stop to our ordinary practices, either of devotion or activity, there must be the greatest gain in trustful acquiescence in His Will; and that not only to ourselves, but even to those who we may at first sight be inclined to suppose losers by our incapabilities. If there seems to be nothing else left you to do in a time of sickness or general depression and *malaise*, this is

a grand time for practising self-control. Not only the self-indulgent acts which may be restrained (I do not mean any rightful alleviations of pain or discomfort, but things we feel to be pure self-indulgence), nor even the impatient, murmuring, peevish words which may be restrained—often at no slight cost, our guardian angel knows,—but even the countenance and aspect may be disciplined and restrained, so that discontent, or depressed disgust at all around, should not find an outlet and expression visible in the face, or tone of voice or attitude. We have all, at one time or another, known what it is to be uncomfortably affected by the gloomy, depressed, bemoaning face and manner of some one with whom we were thrown, and have felt the chilly infection of weariness and blight such influences spread. Let it be our resolution never to be the cause

of so hindering others; and any one who makes the effort to attain a cheerful, calm manner amid circumstances tending to dismay or woe, will be surprised to find how often in seeking the external calm the internal peace comes of itself. "God loves a cheerful giver;" and surely He loves a cheerful *taker* too, of all the ever-changing waves and tides of daily discipline which He sends or suffers to bring His children nearer and nearer to Himself.

There is a touching anecdote told of Lacordaire, who, amid the height of his popularity, and the endless visits and interruptions of all kinds which poured in upon him, was singularly sensitive to the annoyance of such inroads. Looking upon this sensitiveness as self-will and want of charity, he told his director of it, saying that at each knock at the door he found it hard to suppress a movement of impatience;

and being determined to conquer the fault (as he unhesitatingly called it), the great Dominican requested his friend frequently to come in uncalled, and assist him in learning to repress even a shadow of vexation in tone or look.

It may seem a small thing to accept some food which is not attractive, or which is not prepared to your taste, without a complaint; to wait without irritation when some little expected service is delayed or forgotten; to restrain any vexed comment when some attention or kindness you thought you had a right to expect is omitted, or when some one of whose sympathy and consideration you felt sure seems to fail. Very little matters—perhaps you are almost ashamed to own how sensitive you are to such; and yet be sure any one of them offered simply and heartily to God will be accepted

like the cup of cold water, and you would be surprised if you knew (which probably you never will) how happy an influence some such trifling thing has had on those about you. The little seed of forbearance, or patience, or trust may, unconsciously to you, be sown in another's heart by your act; as, indeed, the evil crop of unlovely deeds, words, and thoughts may be terribly encouraged by what those around,—who perhaps look to you as one superior to themselves in age, experience, or religious advancement,—see and hear from you.

Friends are not always judicious in ministering to our sufferings, bodily or mental. You do not try to send an invalid to sleep by loud talking, and exaggerated pity does not really soothe. Perhaps we have all felt that the friend who spoke with tenderness and sympathy, of course; but nevertheless with

a certain bracing authority of truth and courage, left us more refreshed and more anxious for his return than did the softer visitor who could only pity and moan with us.

If you cannot attain to great generosity in your acceptance of pain, try to make up for it by patience. You cannot help feeling downcast, but you can offer your will and your tongue to submission. Try not to talk more than is needful about your troubles to those around, even those who really care and sympathize; but, on the other hand, talk as much as ever you please to your Father, your Lord, your ever-present Comforter. Tell out every thought thus, and although you may not formularize your confidences into any special shape, they are the very truest, most effectual of prayers, be sure.

One who for years struggled against

falling into a state of nervous irritation and depression, and who did succeed most marvellously in the effort, acknowledged, among other little plans, to one for making three "acts" of patience during the day—varying in character from a cup of lukewarm tea, or the second volume of an interesting book not at hand when wanted, to the keenly felt delay of a letter that ought to have come from one very dear, or the failure of a promised visit or ministration greatly longed for. These were all "little stages" by which to climb onward and upward.

Impatience will never greatly prevail with one who, in suffering, remembers his Lord, and prays "more earnestly."

The character becomes hardened and enfeebled at once by impatience, whether under pain, desolation, or any other trial. Any doctor will tell you

how terribly it hinders his work—as, indeed, all healing process; and as with the body, so with the soul. The impatient sick man disturbs his bandages, frets his wounds, drives away sleep; and spiritual remedies are in like manner neutralized by impatience. The burden we are perpetually striving to shake off grows heavier with each effort; the livelier our rebellion against God's Will, the more keenly it presses. A saint who once heard some vehement complaints from one whom he was visiting of the carelessness of his secretary, remarked, "Your Excellency, are you as faithful and exact in the service of God as you expect your servants to be in yours?" There is a supernatural side to everything—the lowliest and most commonplace—as well as the natural side; and those who by prayer and diligent striving, and confiding love, learn to make that the

reality to themselves, rather than the side which they continually see and touch and feel, will find life, not indeed an easy, painless probation—that is not what our Father means it to be —but so full of meaning, of hope, of bright gleams, and at the darkest, of upward onlooking, that the clouds will never rest long upon them without relief, and very soon the shadows will pass away for ever, and that glorious light, in which we shall see all light, will burst upon us, never again to fade away.

XXXIV.

NATURAL and supernatural. They are words very freely used in our days,—discussed as freely as if one was much on the same level as the other, and the advantage, indeed, was rather on the side of the purely natural. But ask some long-tried sufferer, to whom the sweetness of life has altogether passed, to whom only the grey twilight side of that which is purely natural remains, or can ever be looked for—ask such an one, if he is blessed with the gift of faith, what the supernatural can do or be to him, and he will tell you that it is everything. He knows that by communion with the things unseen, he fights through the dreariness which

would otherwise overwhelm him; that however lonely as to this world, he is never alone, because he believes and knows that, were his eyes opened, he would see a multitude of loving, sympathetic, helpful spirit-friends around him; that through the gifts men call supernatural, death has no sting, and tears no bitterness.

Surely no prayer is more needed by all, but especially by those actually experiencing the fact of suffering, than that our Loving Father would teach us the sacred secret of suffering rightly, so that even now, if it be His Will, but assuredly hereafter, our sorrow may be turned to joy. Meanwhile we may be sure that nothing but supernatural grace can give us any calm, any patient strength under trial or discomfort, and the "harmonious fusion" of your will and God's can be produced by no other means. It is a solemn thought, that

the weary hours, which to some now seem so long, have their appointed number, and each hour as it passes leaves us one less—one less, truly, to suffer; but also one less in which to make ready for the great change coming, when time will altogether cease for us, and only be as a thing of the past, used or misused when we had it.

There is nothing earthly to which the dust will not cleave; and as dust is said by modern science to be most injurious to the physical health and life, so verily is the dust which cleaves to our spirit, or to which it cleaves, hindering to the spiritual life, choking and clogging, blinding and deafening the quickness of higher aspirations. Sickness or loneliness do for us what it may be we should not have courage to do for ourselves; they draw us away from the world's traffic which creates this dust. It may be we little kno-

the burning sun-heat or tempestuous storm from which we are shielded by the solitude or illness which seems so trying. I think in the whole most intensely interesting life of Lacordaire there is no incident so touching, so full of instruction, as the record by one of his friends of a great Mission at Lyons, when Lacordaire was almost canonized —busy men sitting patiently for hours before his sermon to secure places, the whole town wild after him. But one night, after a conference, when the preacher, usually so precise in obeying all fixed hours, did not appear in the refectory, his friend went to look for him. No answer to the knock. He went in and found Lacordaire prostrate before the Crucifix, his head between both hands, absorbed in a sobbing prayer. Almost alarmed, the friend spoke to him.

"Oh, I am frightened—I am fright-

ened!" was all the strong man, who had such empire over men's hearts, could say.

"Frightened? Of what?"

"Of this success!" was the touching answer.

Truly success, prosperity, all things bright and to our mind, are what few of us are competent to bear to our soul's good; and the time will come to us all, when we shall look back upon these dark, trying hours, from which we now so long to escape, as to be preferred far beyond those when "all men spoke well of us," and everything was to our mind. It is not easy to think so now; and even if our reason and faith are convinced that it is so, nature still craves for what is pleasant and enjoyable.

Your minor troubles, bodily and mental, are precisely the antidote to some of your most serious spiritual

dangers, be sure. Our modern vine disease, the phylloxera, is all but imperceptible, yet it ruins the crops, unless dealt with in time; and your petty weaknesses and faults would soon eat out your spiritual life, were it not for the weariness, and lifelessness, and manifold little troubles which seem to you so hard to bear; but which really keep you in a state of continual prayer, and active seeking after and rest in God. Honestly, without letting go faith, or devotion, or earnestness, do you think that when you feel bright, and well, and cheerful, and all things around are pleasant and prosperous, you are so constantly appealing to God, resting on Him with *quite* so much tenacity, fixing your hopes and aims *quite* so much on the things unseen? And if not, however little preferable now, will you really regret that this passing moment is darkened

for the sake of eternity? I know the difficulty is to persevere in such faithful patience. Time is here now; eternity is a great thing we cannot in the smallest degree grasp, so time necessarily has the greater influence now. But hold on; if it be even for years, they will seem to you less than a moment of time when once your eyes are opened, and that which is mortal puts on immortality. Look, meanwhile, upon all that is hard to bear as so much capital given you to be invested for eternity, and do not wrap it up in a napkin, or throw it away. Let each weary or painful moment as it passes be stored up for you in the Book of Life.

XXXV.

THERE are many most beautiful and helpful thoughts to be found in the revelations of S. Gertrude. One of these, which, if duly pondered, might help many a soul to bear its scarcely understood load patiently, and even joyfully, comes before us. "When I behold a soul barren in the virtues I love," (our Lord said to S. Gertrude), "I heap bodily trials and spiritual troubles upon that soul, and frequently the interior troubles are far the heaviest. My aim is to find an entrance into that soul, which draws Me to it by its sufferings, while it is constrained to cry aloud upon Me, whereas before it scarce ever spoke to Me." If,

amid whatever tries and harasses us, we could realize the Voice of the Beloved calling us to nearer sympathy and communion with Himself, surely the weariness of life would melt into wonder and love, and we should thankfully accept whatever it might be which could leave so blessed a result. Saints have realized it. I know the answer, and that we are not saints; but be very sure the last thing they ever thought of themselves was that they were saintly: they only strove day by day to live as near to Him as they could, to carry out as far as possible in every thought, word, and act what they believed to be His Will. It was not because they were saints that they achieved such loving submission; it was the loving submission which at length, in due time, under the fructification of His grace, achieved the saintliness. This it was that made

S. Francis de Sales able to say, when prevented by illness from preaching, "Since God wills that I should not serve Him with my lips, I can anyhow serve Him with patience."

If we had courage to face the dreariness, or desolation, or lack of savour in life which forces us, so to say, back upon God, we should realize what an infinite blessing in reality that trial is which drives us to our real Highest Good. "There are times," one writes, "when my trouble is not so much that anything has gone very wrong with me —all is much as it was a while since, when I was fairly happy,—but I feel thoroughly depressed and miserable in myself. I cannot find pleasure in anything; there is an instinctive shuddering and shrinking in me from everything; all I have to do seems oppressive and difficult; there is no life, no brightness anywhere; it is a sort of 'no man

cared for my soul' feeling. Then I can do nothing but keep crying out to God every moment for help. I have, as it were, to catch on to the thought of His love and help—in which *I believe*, though I am totally unable to realize and perceive them, as in happier times I did—as my only chance of support. And even then a trouble comes, for I am hardly able to help thinking sometimes that I do not really care, or love, or lean on Him as I did. But I *know* that is merely temptation, for else I should not cleave to the thought and hope of His love as my one only stay; and I *do* cling to it, like a drowning man to the life-buoy, I feel."

Dear friend, it is very hard to bear; but is not that poor piteous clinging, that realizing that there is no other possible hope or help for you, the best possible proof that your Dear Lord is very near you, that His Hand is holding

you up all the time? and will you not have heart's courage to accept, and that gladly (by an act of will—I know you cannot *feel* glad), the condition of utter distress that brings you so close to Him, and makes your every breath to depend upon the breathing of His Gracious Spirit? Remember Fénelon's touching exclamation, "All is bitterness!" ("Tout m'est amertume!") And yet who is there that can for one moment doubt his entire, utter closeness to the Dear Lord for whom he wrestled and toiled so unremittingly? Oh no; it is not the cloud that now damps or hides pleasure and brightness from us, which we shall hereafter look upon as the regrettable part of our lives. "When my spirit was in heaviness Thou knewest my path: I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: O deliver me, for I am helpless and poor. Make the storm to cease, and bring me to

the haven where I would be. Thou knowest whereof we are made; yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him. Satisfy me, Lord, with Thy mercy; for Thou, O God, art my God. In God's Word will I rejoice, in the Lord's Word will I comfort me; yea, in God have I put my trust; and I know that Thou wilt deliver my feet from falling. Though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee."

"I know Thou never wilt forsake
The soul which, trembling, clings to Thee."

XXXVI.

As our years increase, our pleasures grow rarer, and perhaps at last altogether cease, while to some the certainty that they will never return makes their very memory irksome. But does it follow that we have nothing save dreariness in store? Surely not; there is no period of life altogether joyless. Let us first clearly understand that joy, combined with love, is the noblest and deepest characteristic of a Christian soul. It is not an earth-born thing; earth can only bring forth *pleasure*. Joy is a supernatural treasure, at once soft and strong, which is as a very reflection of God's own Self within us. It is incompatible with

remorse, but it blends perfectly with pain and sorrow. God often makes use of suffering to enable us to appreciate supernatural joys. Is there not a very true joy in the steadfast hope that we are living in the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"?—words we daily use, without perhaps remembering the fulness of their meaning. Is there no joy to a penitent heart, grieving even for forgiven sin, in the thought that so many occasions for sin are passed or passing away, and the time of probation, during which we must ever fear lest we displease our Father, becoming so short? Is there no joy in feeling that some of the many temptations which used to vex us are withering away; that our habits of trust and hope and devotion are strengthening as earth's allurements fade, and Paradise becomes a thing nearer to our earth-bound imagi-

nations? The very powerlessness to enjoy pleasures which once fascinated or misled us, points out that we are daily growing nearer to His Presence, where is "the fulness of joy." Shall we regret if for a little time we are bidden chiefly to live on the hope of that? And is it not a good and fitting preparation for the real greater joy, that our natural capacity for this life's enjoyments, lawful and innocent as they may be, should lessen and fade away? Unquestionably it is difficult to stand, so to say, between the two; to feel that we have no longer elasticity and strength to enjoy the things we once enjoyed, that the people we loved have passed on before us, and that "strangers and sojourners" becomes stamped on all that concerns us; while the hand stretched out to the Unseen trembles, and the sight is dim and feeble, as it strains towards the In-

visible, and we almost feel at times as the sailor must feel, clinging to the fragments of his wrecked vessel, and dreading lest his strength to hold on should fail before the longed-for succour comes. Only our Help is certain; it is "a rock higher than I" on which we rest, and however the waves and storms dash about, however faint the twilight grows, there is no vague trust to uphold us, but a sure knowledge that the Lord Himself is our Keeper, and that whether we pass through fire or water, whether the sharp scorching of pain and sorrow or the chill mists of loneliness and blankness try us to the very utmost stretch of endurance, He is there and He will bear His children through to the end.

One after another in his turn, every Christian is called into the Garden of Gethsemane, it has been said; scarce one truly following his Master but

must sooner or later cry out from his very soul as he lies prostrate in agony, "Father, not my will, but Thine, be done." And it is not only great visible sorrows, patent to all beholders, that take us thither. Every trouble of soul and spirit, of conscience, or of the tender, sensitive heart, wounded by those it loves, whose love it fain would grasp, and may not; every weary ache under ingratitude, miscomprehension, failure of friendship, disappointment in those on whom we reckoned for lasting love; every failure in consistency and trustworthiness in those we looked up to; every lack of response, or memory, from those on whom, it may be, we have lavished our all—far more than material things,—the hidden treasures of heart's life and strength; —all these, and countless like pangs, are hallowed and dignified by the remembrance that they do indeed lead

us into the Garden of Gethsemane, and that, "watered with His Life-blood," they are the answer to our prayer, perhaps once too lightly uttered, to be baptized with His Baptism, and drink of His Cup.

Our Blessed Lord is often set before us in art, with the Angel of the Passion holding out a cup—*the* cup of bitterness—to Him. When any sorrow comes to us through another, be it a friend who fails us, or some other who more or less wittingly grieves us, it is good to try and look on that person as representing the angel, holding to us the cup of suffering; and if any shadow of resentment has darkened your mind, this thought will surely clear it away. Then we, too, may take unhesitatingly to ourselves the cry, "If it be possible, let it pass away."

And possibly it may do so; but more

often our Loving Father deals with us even as He dealt with His Incarnate Son, and we must indeed drink it. Oh for grace to drink it willingly, and that so often as it is presented to our lips; for though, as it has been said, the drained cup is often found full of grace, the bitter draught may be, generally is, renewed again and again while life lasts.

XXXVII.

It is good sometimes to examine and see how many of our pains and distresses in life spring from what we scarcely choose to call the ingratitude of others; and yet that is what in our inner heart we feel them to be. The truth is, we are all so self-conscious, and have such a deep root of inveterate selfishness in us, that only a very constant prayer for and search after real charity—S. Paul's loving charity, which never thinks, or imagines, or distorts anything on the unloving side—can keep us from endless interminable wounds and scratches among "the briars of this work-a-day world." Our little kindnesses perhaps pass unheeded;

delicate refinements of affection or friendship are unperceived; efforts to please, mighty to the maker, unnoticed by those to whom they are offered, fall flat, and are trodden out; sacrifices are made, and not known to have been such; shy, reserved hearts open themselves a little way, and shrink up again, fancying that they are not understood, or are repulsed, when perhaps it is only that the recipient of the half-confidence which has burst irrepressibly forth, is as shy and reserved as the other. We all crave for sympathy, and for the exquisite delight of resting, if but for a moment, in love upon an "answering soul;" and perhaps scarcely anything is harder to bear than the sense of check in such craving, and the utter "aloneness" that follows on it to a tender spirit. But cannot we carry this pain, as part of our life's offering, to the foot of the

Cross, and believe that He, Whose very nearest all forsook Him and fled; knows, understands, and in His own time will fill up the aching wound of such as are fain to look round and see "there was no man that would know" them? Surely, in our saddest moments of loneliness and desolation, if our eyes were opened, we should see friends and comforters; angels, spirits of blessed ones who have known sorrow, but know it no more; our own beloved who have passed over Jordan, and can now witness our trials, with the glad certainty that these are but bringing us nearer the Haven they have reached, and we would fain reach—shall reach, by God's grace, in a little while:—all these, and countless hosts of the Great Invisible World which wraps us round, we should see, were it granted us. But sight—such sight—might make the yearning too intense for us to persevere

our appointed time here, and therefore we must rest on faith a little while. Only believe that your heart's need of love is known to your Father—is it not He Who has made you so?—and in a way you know not, think not of, He is leading you closer and closer to Himself by means of it. Somewhat of loneliness in life, a passage thence which no earthly love can share—"je mourrai seul," as Pascal says—and then—oh, then, what fulness of joy and love and endless satisfaction for evermore! Cannot we wait in patience a little while with such certainty before us?

XXXVIII.

MELANCHOLY broodings, to which some are much more constitutionally disposed than others, are surely to be steadily resisted. S. Bernard speaks of such as a grievous hindrance to the spiritual life, and S. Augustine says they are like a nail clenching the soul to earth. Necessarily they foster selfishness; while unselfish hearts will always find work to do for others, and joys and sorrows of others to throw themselves into, forgetting what is peculiar to their own individuality.

"There's not a star the heaven can show,
There's not a cottage hearth below,
But feeds with solace true the willing soul.

> Men love us, or they need our love;
> Truly they own, or heedless prove
> The curse of lawless hearts, the joy of self-control."

When temptations are the cause of depression, as sometimes happens, it is good to remember S. Francis de Sales' favourite saying, that "dogs never bark at the household, only at strangers;" and so the devil often only tries to mislead those who have not given him hold over them, not those of whom he is sure. It needs but to read a little of the lives of the saints, to be convinced that temptations are not only the common lot of all struggling heavenwards, but real blessings often, uprooting self-confidence, and assuring reliance on God. "Somehow," says S. Francis de Sales, "weary and worthless as I feel, it does not trouble me; indeed, I sometimes feel downright glad when I think what

a handle for God's loving mercy I am!"

If the temptation take the shape of doubt whether God can really heed you, care for you, guide your individual steps, ask yourself what He has done for you already? What could He do more to prove His love and watchful care? Is not your very anxiety on the subject a proof that He is ruling and drawing your heart to Himself? Be very sure that it is generally you that fail God, not He that fails you; and amid whatever doubts and fears you may be feeling, He is there, stretching out a Hand which you may not see, and may for the moment fail to find, like a bird fluttering round some vast cathedral, and in its panic refusing to notice the outlets by which it could instantly escape. But when the frightened bird grows quieter, it will see that opening and the sky; and you,

when you grow calm, will be able to say, "Thou, my God, seest me," and realize that it was only your own disturbance and restlessness that hid Him a while from your sight.

"You know only too well," writes a spiritual guide, "how there are moments when all is tumult within us. You experience terrible inward disturbance, violent upheaval, especially under the influence of wounded self-love, and your will is distracted amid opposing influences; or, vexed and angered, you are distracted with internal storms which seem as though they would never give you rest. Such a condition of excitement disturbs your every thought and feeling, and weakens your will. Remember that while the tempest rages, the sailor who is absorbed in the management of his ship becomes, so to say, unconscious of his own existence; and amid your interior

trouble your soul is struggling in like manner for life. Then look to the Cross even as the dying man looks. Let the storm pass over, but while it lasts beware of growing weary of any duty or struggle; cry out to your Lord for succour, as the Apostles did. In His own time He will bid the waves be still. And if consolation is delayed, tarry His time patiently, trust His reasons for delay; be sure that He is none the less helping you, that the help comes not in the way you wish, but in some probably far better way. It is S. Paul who says He gives us more than we know how to desire. Do not be disturbed or uneasy, but strive to thank your Lord alike for what He directly grants, and for what He withholds a while. Meanwhile, try not to fix an over-lively attention on yourself, your own mind, its troubles and variations. A sick person is never the

better for constantly feeling his own pulse, and studying all his symptoms. Nothing is more harmful to the spiritual life than continual self-inspection and self-concentration. Try to turn your thoughts to the things which concern Jesus, and He will give you joy and peace the very first moment that they will be really helpful to you. You may ask them continually, so long as you do not fret because He holds His Hand, and does not answer as you wish instantly. Confidence and courage,—let these be your pass-words. In patience possess your soul, and the reward will not be long, at furthest, in coming. Perfect acquiescence in our Father's Will brings a foretaste of Paradise even to souls that are struggling amid this life's difficulties, not unfrequently.

XXXIX.

FORSAKEN of God? Oh no; not so.

> "The time may come
> When the babe's kiss no sense of pleasure yields
> Even to the doting mother; but Thine own
> Thou never canst forget, nor leave alone."

But you need not be frightened because the terror has swept over you, remembering His cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and there has scarce been one now among the blessed in Paradise who has not felt as you do at some time or other of his probation. It is curious how often those to whom God has granted the privilege of doing most in His service have been most tried in some such ways. Madame de Chantal underwent more than most in

this way, notwithstanding her life of signal self-devotion; notwithstanding the counsellor and stay she had in S. Francis de Sales. One day, when sunk in more than usually trying spiritual desolation, she seemed to hear our Lord's own Voice cheering her, and bidding her study some words in the "Imitation," which were, "Forsake thyself, and thou shalt find Me." In that same chapter (Book III. xxxvii.), Thomas à Kempis says, "Greater grace shall be added to thee the moment thou dost resign thyself, provided thou dost not turn back to take thyself again. . . .

"Some there are who resign themselves, but with certain exceptions; for they put not their whole trust in God, therefore they study how to provide for themselves.

"Some also at first do offer all, but being afterwards assailed with tempta-

tion, they return again to their own ways, and therefore make no progress.

"These shall not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, unless they first make an entire resignation and a daily oblation of themselves unto Me.

"I have very often said unto thee, and now again I say the same: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace.

"Give all for all; seek nothing, require back nothing; abide purely and with a firm confidence in Me, and thou shalt possess Me; thou shalt be free in heart, and darkness shall not tread thee down.

"Let this be thy whole endeavour, let this be thy prayer, this thy desire; that, being stript of all selfishness, thou mayest with entire simplicity follow Jesus only, and, dying to thyself, mayest live eternally to Me.

"Then all vain imaginations, evil

perturbations, and superfluous cares shall fly away; then also immoderate fear shall leave thee."

Surely to "forsake one's self" would be a mighty victory won! How can it be achieved, you ask? "It is simply this," S. Francis answers: "giving up self-will into God's Hands." Those who by steadfast, prayerful effort do this, will gradually become deaf to the storm of temptation around, and though in this life their warfare is never wholly to cease, think what it is to fight always knowing that "the Lord is on my side," and so fearing no evil, and certain to conquer! A soul sorely tempted by desolation once exclaimed, "My God, I should think I did not love Thee, but for my desire to come to Thine altar, even when I can find no joy there. And by all those communions Thou hast vouchsafed me, I believe Thou lovest me, and wilt

grant me to love Thee through all eternity!"

We must not too eagerly crave to be delivered from spiritual trials, since to many they endure until the last enemy, death, is overcome. Well, and if that be my portion, it is not, at furthest, very long off, and then—oh, what will be the awakening in His Presence, for ever free from sin, temptation, and all possibility of falling away!

"It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear:
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee the bitterness of death is past."

Of course there might be a very obvious danger to such as we are, who are not S. Teresas, or S. Chantals, or S. Francises, in imagining our own coldness and carelessness to be spiritual dryness and desolation permitted of

God; but an honest heart truly seeking rest in its Lord will scarce deceive itself there for long, nor could any one, we imagine, not as much in earnest as S. Teresa, have endured the eighteen years of spiritual desolation, during which she describes herself as "never gathering the tiniest flower." "If you are to have only dry bread to eat," says an old writer; "eat it thankfully, for it will sustain your life, though it may not gratify your palate." S. Ignatius used to advise those who were troubled at the weariness and dulness of their meditations, to give an extra five minutes to the exercise, in acceptance of that same weariness.

We are all so greedy after enjoyment; and even those who have in a measure weaned themselves from what they would call worldly enjoyment, still expect to have it made up to them, as it were, by that which is

spiritual, and this God often, in His love, refuses.

There are some seasons in our life when everything seems to fail us at once. "Lord, I give myself wholly up to Thee," was S. Jeanne de Chantal's cry at such times, to which she was no stranger—

> "O Lord, I give myself to Thee,
> Thine ever, only Thine to be."

It is this simply unquestioning, acquiescent mind which, hard as it is to attain, must be our aim—"building no spiritual castles in the air," as has been graphically said. We are all apt to be impatient with our neighbour, with ourselves, and with God; and it is this last kind of impatience, which most of us shrink from acknowledging till it is forced upon us, that has to be conquered when spiritual troubles are heavy. A saint has said, "No one

living has power to comfort him whom God is afflicting in His love;" and verily, at such a season, patience and unlimited confidence alone can carry us through. "When all seems lost, that is the moment of God's victory."

Shall we ever be able to realize for ourselves the venerable Curé d'Ars' words, that "men of the world are disheartened because the cross is laid on them, while good Christians are afraid if it be not their lot. The Christian lives amid crosses as the fish in water. The cross elevates him, loosens him from the world, removes the hindrances to salvation; by it he crosses this life as by a bridge the river"?

There are many things which we believe in life, which we shall dimly realize in death, and which will only burst upon us in their fulness of truth and joy in eternity.

XL.

THE Curé d'Ars used to say that to most of us the heaviest cross is fear of the cross; and in our fear we forget that it is our strength and defence, the treasure which we might rather seek than shun. If your trial seem well-nigh unendurable in its bitterness, think of the *Via Crucis*, and make to yourself stations, as life goes on. Strive to resist the feeling of sick-hearted weariness, which is so apt to become disgust, and go on to despair. Step by step, journey meekly on, and there will come the moment when the last step is won; and while you perhaps are wondering how you can ever achieve the next strain, lo! the warfare is

accomplished, the victory won. Do not stop now and hesitate; go on bravely, like a home-sick traveller, who pushes past all that delays or hinders him.

S. Francis Xavier's prayer was, "Lord, remove not this cross until it has worked that in me for which Thou didst send it;" and if few of us have courage to put up such a prayer, at least we can strive against impatiently tossing aside our crosses.

S. Francis de Sales used to warn people against wanting to have their crosses made of scented wood; as also of failing in courage because they seem to hang alone upon the cross. We may not see Him, but He is ever at hand.

The sharpness of the cross, one sufferer says, takes away all pleasure in earthly things, and all power of rejoicing in things pertaining to the next world. If so, accept the blank,

the helplessness to receive any comfort, and even while so doing, God will pour some drops of consolation into your heart. The promise is to all, "I will not leave you comfortless." A holy man, who was earnestly seeking patience to bear his cross, once seemed to hear his Lord's Voice saying, "I love thee far better than thou lovest thyself; and I could deliver thee from this thy cross, but nevertheless I do not." The patient heart to bear it awhile, is truly a greater blessing than deliverance. Night after night, as you lie down to rest, the weary day ended, think that a day offered to God in weariness and quiet endurance may bring you fuller joy than the brightest, happiest seasons of enjoyment can do; and when morning brings a fresh beginning, it may be of weariness of body and spirit, strive to hear the Voice of God saying, "My son, it is thus I will

that thou shouldest serve Me. If I will that thy service be weary and lifeless, and deficient in all earthly reward and pleasure, what is that to thee, so long as it is My Will? What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Follow thou Me without questioning the love which inflicts this weariness and sadness, and seeming privation of all thou most delightest in."

"Lord, I am certain of Thy unbounded love; I will therefore lay me down in peace and take my rest, neither in love with life nor in fear of death. My lot is in Thy Hands. I cast all my care, Lord, upon Thee, for Thou carest for me, and all the hairs of my head are numbered in Thy sight. Thou hast set me my bounds, which shall not be passed. Thou art the Lord; do as seemeth good in Thine

eyes. Who am I, that I should say, What doest Thou? Shall the clay say to the potter, What doest thou? or the thing formed rebuke him that fashioned it? And are not we in Thy Hands as clay is in the potter's? Thy Will, therefore, be mine. If Thou wilt have me live, my heart is ready, O God; only increase Thy grace, that I may serve Thee more faithfully: if Thou wilt have me die, my heart is ready, O God; only let my spirit be received in peace. Thou, O Christ, art life to me, and to die is gain. If longer life be given me, I will live to Thee, to Thy honour and glory. Wilt Thou that I die, death shall be my gain, for I shall follow and attain Thee Whom my soul loveth and seeketh. If, then, I walk in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Receive me according to Thy Word, and I shall live, and

let me not be disappointed of my hope. Only this I would ask of Thee, Dear Lord: whensoever Thou wilt that I die—to-day or to-morrow, in the midst of my years or in old age—let me die in Thy favour. Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death. Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth. Living or dying, Lord, I am Thine. In me Thy will be done; and let me never be separated from Thee, O God, my God, my all."

So let us ever be found waiting our summons—

"Content to live, but not afraid to die."

THE END.

Esto igitur gratus pro minimo, et eris dignus majora accipere.

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